PERSONALITIES IN ART

ROYAL CORTISSOZ

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PERSONALITIES IN ART

AMERICAN ARTISTS

NINE HOLES OF GOLF

LIFE OF WHITELAW REID

ART AND COMMON SENSE

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

Personalities in Art

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HEAD OF THE VIRGIN

FROM THE DRAWING BY LEONARDO DA VINCI

Personalities in Art

By Royal Cortissoz

Author of "American Artists," "Art and Common Sense,"
"John La Farge: A Memoir and a Study,"
"Augustus Saint-Gaudens," etc.

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Personalities in Art

I

The Art of Art Criticism

I

THE ART OF ART CRITICISM

THE most interesting thing in the world for the art critic in the summer of 1923 was the play of the limelight around — the art critic. Ordinarily he is one of the least conspicuous of mortals. In a practical age he is dedicated to the disinterested pursuit of ideas having no practical value. He exercises functions which have nothing on earth to do with the affairs engaging the majority of mankind. He is to a captain of industry what an astronomer is to a movie star. He could not, if he would, buy an old master; he can only talk about it. But in the year 1923 this talk of his for a little while shared public attention with the occupation of the Ruhr, the divagations of Signor Mussolini, and all the other high-erected themes of a distracted period. With the tidy sum of half a million dollars involved, it was deemed worth while to call in the art critic, a circumstance almost giving him a "practical" status, almost allying him with "big business."

I refer to the *cause célèbre* of "La Belle Ferronnière," the lady otherwise known as Lucrezia Crivelli, whose portrait by Leonardo da Vinci has long been

one of the treasures of the Louvre. Mrs. Andrée Hahn, of Kansas City, owns a portrait of the same subject which she attributes to the same master, and which she proposed to sell to the Kansas City Museum for $500,000. Sir Joseph Duveen's assertion that the painting was not a Leonardo held up the transaction, whereupon Mrs. Hahn brought suit to recover from him the amount named. I have not seen the picture. I have no opinion to express upon it. But I have been fascinated by that other picture presented by the situation developed in preparation for the trial.

Mrs. Hahn's painting was submitted in Paris to the scrutiny of a galaxy of all the critical talents, gathered together by Sir Joseph Duveen. Mr. Bernard Berenson came over from Italy. Sir Charles Holmes, of the National Gallery, arrived from London. Herr Bode was expected from Berlin, but, I believe, could not come. This was, perhaps, as well, since Mrs. Hahn's attorney, who was present at all these proceedings, might have dragged in disconcerting allusions to another Leonardesque incident, that of the famous wax bust. But it is not my object to enumerate here the entire personnel of the critical clan. The point is simply that the clan was summoned, and that the world on both sides of the Atlantic respectfully listened to what it had to say. And while they waited to see which side should prevail, many observers were doubtless moved to reflec-

tion and inquiry on the whole broad question of the rôle of the critic. If he is to play his part in court along with the other experts familiar there, with the authorities on chemistry, engineering, lunacy, and so on, how far do his credentials go and what is the story of their establishment?

In the eyes of a multitude of artists the critic is an enemy of mankind, and it is easy to see how this notion has arisen. Consider the difference between the chemist and the art critic, functioning as experts. It embraces a crucial element. One deals with insensate things; the other with the works of human beings. The chemist hurts no feelings; the art critic sometimes rasps them horribly. Judge Parry, in a delightful paper on the celebrated case of Whistler *vs.* Ruskin, in which his father, Sergeant Parry, appeared for the plaintiff, recalls an apposite story. Ruskin wrote to a friend that he hoped a devastating criticism he had published on that individual's picture would make no difference in their friendship. "Dear Ruskin," replied the artist, "next time I meet you I shall knock you down, but I hope it will make no difference in our friendship." There is the nubbin of the question as it lies between the artist and the critic. Wounded *amour propre* has never yet permitted a man to reason impersonally. The validity of criticism as an art passes right out of the consciousness of an artist who has been rubbed the wrong way. This leads to some droll attitudes. An actor, for example, will tell you

that the fate of a play, by which we may suppose him to mean judgment on its merits, depends upon the opinions passing in conversation among theatre-goers. He will respect the simple statement of "Good" or "Rotten," which may be heard as the audience disperses. The statement, of course, may be made by an auditor who knows nothing about the art of the stage, who knows only what he likes, who knows only whether he has been entertained or bored. On the other hand, the trained critic who not only says that the thing is bad but gives his reasons, gets the actor's goat.

It is in the nature of things. It will always be so. But it sheds no light on our problem. Let us return to Whistler. He won damages of but a farthing out of the trial. Forthwith he set out to get even in his own way. Summing up what he called "the *fin mot* and spirit of this matter," he proceeded to belabor Ruskin and, through him, all art critics. He raised some good laughs, laughs to be enjoyed with him to this day by any open-minded reader, whether he be artist or critic; but he failed to contribute a feather's weight to the philosophy of the subject. I may note his principal fallacy: "He [the critic] brands himself as the necessary blister for the health of the painter, and writes that he may do good to his art." The critic does nothing of the sort. The point that Whistler overlooked is that evaluation is description. To say that a picture is bad in this or that respect is

only incidentally to admonish the artist; the real purpose is to tell the lay reader what it is like.

Whistler is the salient exponent of the argument that the artist alone is the person to tell you what a work of art is like, or worth. "Shall the painter then decide upon painting? Shall *he* be the critic and sole authority? Aggressive as is this supposition, I fear that, in the length of time, his assertion alone has established what even the gentlemen of the quill accept as the canons of art and recognize as the masterpieces of work." It is a plausible dictum and only gains in plausibility as you turn to some of the sayings of artists. Read the "Pensées" of Ingres, or Delacroix, or Rodin. Read one of the most beautiful books on art ever printed, "Les Maîtres d'Autrefois," written by Fromentin, an artist. Whistler himself, in his "Ten o'Clock," delivered some precious observations. In the invaluable "Impressions sur la Peinture" of Alfred Stevens, the Franco-Belgian master, there is a reflection which it is impossible to deny: *Un grand artiste est en général un bon critique, parce qu'il pénètre mieux dans les arcanes des choses.* The most illuminating talk on art to which I have ever listened was that of John La Farge. I need not labor the subject. From Leonardo down there have been artists who were magnificently eloquent and instructive on their mystery. But that, I maintain, means simply that from time to time — and not very often — the artist has been doubled with the philos-

opher and the critic. He has happened to possess, in addition to his artistic gift, the critical faculty, which is a thing by itself. He has been a good critic not merely because he has been an artist but because the gods have given him a dual nature.

There is the familiar hypothesis that the critic is an artist who has failed, but I need not dwell on this. It is refuted by the testimony of uncounted exhibitions that, along with his betters, the artist who has failed goes right on painting. Nor is the artist who has succeeded necessarily a profitable guide. Stevens has noted the intense preoccupation of the successful painter with the formulas through which he has won his success. It is the foible of most artists, standing forever in the way of their exercising a catholic and sympathetic judgment in matters of art. They see things too much in the light of what they have themselves done. I speak here not from theory but from observation. No, we must seek elsewhere than among artists for criticism. Stevens himself gives us a helpful clew when he says: *L'opinion d'un connaisseur est plus flatteuse que les suffrages de la foule ignorante.* In connoisseurship resides the key to criticism, in knowledge, vitalized by natural taste and *flair*. It corresponds in art to what Matthew Arnold was driving at in letters when he talked about the critic's knowing the best that had been thought and said in the world.

In knowing. It is the corner-stone of criticism. I

have at my elbow one of the classical achievements in art criticism, the yellowed pages of a series of articles printed long ago in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*. They were written by the French critic Thoré, over the name of "W. Burger," and they announce his reconstitution of the works of Vermeer of Delft. Jan Vermeer was known before him, but his works were largely hidden under other names in the galleries of Europe. Thoré divined him and restored to him his lost masterpieces. With inexhaustible patience and industry in research, with "conviction, ardor, and passion," as Havard says, with intuition and with knowledge, he plodded through the museums, spotted the previously unknown Vermeers, and gave a great painter to fame. I wonder if any painter, in the rôle assigned to him by Whistler in the passage I have quoted, has ever performed a similar service to the cause of art? How often does the painter have the time, or the temperament, to delve as the critic delves? How much pains does he take to *know?*

Thoré's great *coup* dates from 1866. It was in the early seventies that Giovanni Morelli, an Italian writing in German over a Russian name, that of "Ivan Lermolieff," made his first excursions in the art of art criticism and demonstrated that if it was an art it was also to some extent susceptible of approximation to an exact science. In studies of the works of certain masters in German and Italian galleries he developed a method as painstaking as that

of Thoré, with traits of its own placing the whole matter upon a firmer basis than it had ever had before. He analyzed the characteristics of a painter with the systematic thoroughness of an anatomist. He turned comparison from an odious thing into a source of illumination. His method has been in use ever since, and largely through its influence art criticism, in the modern sense, has been as fully professionalized as art itself, strong in research and documentation, coming into court with emphasis upon facts as well as upon imponderables.

Art criticism is not a matter of casual and capricious impressionism, but a reasoned activity of the mind. The indisposition of some commentators to regard it in that light is partly explained by the fact that once in so often the critic perpetrates a perfectly gorgeous howler. In 1909 Bode bought in London, for £8,000, for the Berlin Museum, a wax bust of "Flora" which he attributed to Leonardo da Vinci. It presently turned out to be the work of a deceased British sculptor named Lucas. When the inside of it was explored it yielded a fragment of a mid-Victorian bed quilt. In 1910 Mr. James Grieg, an English critic, tried to persuade the world that the famous "Rokeby Venus" was painted, not by Velasquez, but by Raphael Mengs. Decidedly your art critic is, like everybody else, a fallible creature, and he is never so near to discrediting himself as when he sets up to be a pope. But that is an error which may

overtake a man in any walk of life. It doesn't touch the essentials of valid art criticism, which are knowledge, experience, research, scientific system — all endued with a force sprung from that mysterious thing called *flair*. For art criticism is nothing if not, with all its other resources, clairvoyant. One of Berenson's comments on the Hahn picture, quoted in the cables, provides a useful illustration. "It hasn't," he said, "the severity of a true Leonardo." Severity, no less. How are you to weigh and measure that? Can you touch and handle it? How are you to prove or disprove its presence in a given picture? You can't settle the question by rule of thumb. Either you feel Leonardo's severity or you don't. I remember looking some thirty years ago at the "Madonna of San Onofrio," on the Janiculum, and wondering why it was called a Leonardo. It seemed to me, as it seemed to others, to have been painted by Boltraffio. But nobody that I know of has ever been able conclusively to demonstrate that attribution, which is nevertheless now generally accepted. Imagine a drawing, falsely given to Botticelli, and submitted to a critic of Italian art. Ask him why he rejects it. If he tells you that the line is rigid, inelastic, where Botticelli's line is supple, flowing, do you expect him to tell you how he knows? How, save through a power of perception residing only partly in his eyes. Knowledge of Botticelli's drawings helps him. So does instinct, *flair*.

I thought of the effect of the play of that instinct when the death of Sorolla revived discussion of his art. Everybody remembers the sensation that he made when an immense collection of his works was shown at the Hispanic Museum some years ago. The *foule ignorante* hailed him tumultuously as the opener of a new heaven and a new earth. He was an accomplished painter. He knew how to depict figures moving in the open air and in the water, under blazing sunshine, and he turned his clever trick to something like perfection. There never were more joyous pictures. Only they were not the evidences of a great creative art. It was the business of the art critic to enforce that point, to enforce the discrimination which is the central principle in the enjoyment of works of art; and as he reflects upon the altered status of Sorolla, abundantly honorable but not by any means what it was at the Hispanic show, he may be forgiven if he smiles at the Whistlers of this world, with their *ipse dixits* as to who shall and who shall not open his mouth about painting. I see Berenson in my mind's eye as he was described in the despatches, "with immaculately white-gloved hands," pointing out what he saw in the picture before him. I am aware of his learning, of his long study of Leonardo. Speaking of the picture in the Louvre, he said that forty years ago he had been just ignorant enough to doubt its authenticity. Now the doubts were all gone. Greater knowledge had worked the change in

his opinion. Also the source of his later thought was that instinct which guided him in the matter of Leonardo's "severity," a thing not so much to be seen as felt. This, as I have said, has come to be a factor in tangible affairs, a factor to be reckoned with in courts. Study of facts has come to fortify a spiritual thing. With the passage of time, a new sanction has been conferred upon the great saying of Keats: "When I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary reperception and ratification of what is fine."

II

The Art Critic as Iconoclast

I. Professor Van Dyke on Rembrandt
II. Professor Van Dyke on Vermeer

II

THE ART CRITIC AS ICONOCLAST

I

PROFESSOR VAN DYKE ON REMBRANDT

When Professor John C. Van Dyke's "Rembrandt and His School" was published, it achieved notoriety in something quicker than the proverbial leap; it made its sensation even before it was read. On the day of its appearance in the fall of 1923, the salient point it assumed to prove was given out to the world, the point thus succinctly stated on the wrapper: "There are eight hundred pictures given to Rembrandt by experts and authorities, but Professor Van Dyke can give him only a scant fifty." That, by itself, was enough to excite talk. It was as though some one had suddenly announced that Shakespeare could have only six of his plays, Beethoven only three of his symphonies. The outburst of scepticism provoked was perfectly natural. But it included remarks which only served to cloud the issue.

The assertion was made in some quarters that Professor Van Dyke was not a recognized authority on Rembrandt, and consequently did not deserve a hearing. He is not a recognized authority on the

subject, it is true. He has not fought in the lists as such. Previously he had published no formal contributions to it of which I had any knowledge. But he has been known as an intelligent writer on art for many years, during which he has fu- tioned also as a teacher of the history of art in Rutgers College. He tells us in his book that he began to question certain Rembrandt attributions as far back as 1883 and that he has ridden the hobby ever since. Humanly speaking, he ought by this time to have something to say about the Dutch master, and there is no earthly reason why he shouldn't say it or why it shouldn't receive courteous attention. Also, it is apposite to point out that the reservation of a topic for two or three sacrosanct oracles may be overdone. There is nothing presumptuous, nothing unlawful, in Professor Van Dyke's differing with Bode, Bredius, and De Groot. They know their Rembrandt well, and it is fitting that their judgments should be received with respect. With respect, yes, but not with obsequious awe. A cat may look at a king.

The truth is that behind this thwacking of Professor Van Dyke with names there lies more than the substantial repute of the men who own them. There lies also the overweening confidence of the American in the foreigner. There is a type of collector in the United States whose conduct in the presence of a European expert resembles that of a rabbit in the presence of a hungry boa-constrictor. What impresses

him about the old master for which he is negotiating is especially the "certification" from some foreign authority that is offered with the picture. It would be interesting to get these experts in a row and extort from them a list of the documents with which they have thus fortified the art market for the last thirty or forty years. Their good faith is, of course, unimpeachable, but, as Doctor Johnson said, the author of a lapidary inscription is not upon oath, and neither is the author of one of these "certifications." I wonder, anyhow, if all of them have the value of Mosaic revelation. Doctor Bode, for example, is the man who bought a mid-Victorian wax bust of "Flora" under the impression that it was a Leonardo. The Kaiser, with his omniscient wisdom, backed him up in this hypothesis, and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the sculpture figures as a Leonardo in the Berlin Museum to this day. It would be foolish to regard this episode as invalidating Bode's learning where Rembrandt is concerned, but it may fairly be taken as justifying Professor Van Dyke in having opinions of his own, even though they are not in exact harmony with the opinions of the German director.

He has arrived at these opinions by prolonged study in European and American galleries, public and private, and he has organized them for the purpose of his book by the comparative method. Little by little the whole Rembrandt *œuvre* took on for him the aspect of "a huge snowball that had gathered

to itself the work of the school," and in attempting to reduce that ball to its original ingredients he would assign each one to the painter whose characteristics seemed to him to proclaim themselves. Say he found a picture given to Rembrandt which struck him as looking like a Bol. He would turn to the admitted works of Bol, make a comparison, and, while using the originals in his study of the subject, he would also employ photographs, placing them side by side. This is what he does in the book. He uses the "deadly parallel." His general discussion occupies only six brief chapters, filling about forty pages. The bulk of the volume is made up of tersely annotated lists, accompanied by plates. Here it is not Rembrandt, but the pupil, who comes, so to say, into the foreground; the master is impoverished that the pupil may be enriched. Take Eeckhout as a specimen. Each one of four admitted pictures by him has beside it a picture which Professor Van Dyke also assigns to him, parenthetically noting that it is otherwise "given to Rembrandt."

This method the author evidently regards as being so efficacious as practically to take the burden of proof off his hands. All you have to do is to study his photographs — with others to be obtained by yourself, for those cases which he does not illustrate — identify resemblances, and call it a day. "In rearranging the pictures," he says, "I have allowed them to fall where they would. I have had no theory to en-

force and have sought merely that pictures of a kind, æsthetically, mentally, and technically, should go together. Names have not prejudiced me, and in the distribution Rembrandt has been allowed to fare the same as Bol or Horst or Eeckhout. The result of the rearrangement has been that thirty or more groups of pictures have formed themselves rather than been formed by me." This passage is not altogether persuasive. "I have had no theory to enforce." Not consciously, it would appear. But in effect, I should say, if he has not been ridden by a theory he has been the victim of an obsession, of an *idée fixe*. It is said that we usually have some difficulty in seeing ourselves as others see us. A red-headed man admits that he is red-headed. A woman equally rufous will call herself auburn-haired and think herself into the conviction. Professor Van Dyke may repudiate the notion that there is any theory in his book, but it is hard to see what else has so steadily lured him into the trick of jamming square pegs into round holes.

Let us turn, however, from his method to his results, endeavoring to make a just test of his findings. I have studied the book from beginning to end with the utmost care, not contented to draw alone upon memories of great numbers of the Rembrandts in question, but consulting also a voluminous collection of photographs. I have made endless comparisons in the manner urged by the author, seeking always to give his argument the utmost possible weight. It is

essential in an examination of this kind to meet the iconoclast half way, to give him every possible advantage, and to keep an open mind. At the same time one must realize in this case the peculiar gravity of Professor Van Dyke's assumption. His denudation of Rembrandt is terrific. It entails a proportionate responsibility. If he is to be listened to at all he must advance very solid reasons.

On the principle of allowing Professor Van Dyke to put his best foot forward I touch first upon the most plausible comparison he makes. It is between the portrait of Rembrandt's sister which hangs in the Liechtenstein gallery at Vienna and the version of the same subject which hangs in the Brera at Milan. I may cite part of his analysis:

> The Liechtenstein portrait is profound. The face is an epitome of all that is typical, sensitive, noble, refined in Dutch girlhood. It is a wonder and a marvel and becomes more wonderful and marvellous the longer you look at it. Keep on looking at it for five or ten minutes and let it unfold to you its own depth, subtlety, and penetration, No one but a great master could do such a work as that. Now turn to the Brera portrait and do you not instantly feel a great loosening of the mental grasp, a falling down in the mental conception? The personality of the sitter now appears shallow. She is merely an empty-headed girl posing for her portrait. She epitomizes nothing, stands for nothing, reveals nothing but a superficial exterior, such as any Dutch girl from the burgher quarter might show. The emptiness of the conception, the lack of thought or of reflection in the painter, even the lack

of comprehensive vision, is too apparent for further argument. That alone might be sufficient to convince one that the two portraits were not painted by the same man.

The distinctions he draws in the matter of mental conception he confirms when he discusses the emotional significance of the two portraits, and he is equally shrewd in the discussion of purely technical differences. His conclusion that the Brera portrait was painted not by Rembrandt but by Jan Lievens is so persuasive that one is inclined to regard the matter as settled. Professor Van Dyke is unmistakably confident in this case, so confident that he puts it in the forefront of his study. Impressed by it, we go on to a systematic survey of his lists. Immediately we begin to scent trouble — not for Rembrandt, but for his critic. The scheme is alphabetical, so I will begin with Jacob Backer. The "Young Dutchwoman" by Rembrandt, in the Metropolitan Museum, is placed side by side with a portrait by Backer in London. The comparison moves Professor Van Dyke to give the Rembrandt to Backer. What promptly strikes me about it is that it discloses a vitality which the Backer conspicuously lacks. An exactly similar impression is left when the author compares Mrs. Havemeyer's "Portrait of an Old Lady" with a Backer in Berlin. The New York painting is alive, the other is not. Then Professor Van Dyke takes up the famous "Elizabeth Bas," at Amsterdam. It has been doubted before. Doctor Bredius advanced

the hypothesis that it was painted by Bol. Professor Van Dyke gives it to Backer. If Rembrandt must be robbed of this great portrait, then Bol might better have it than Backer. Once in this sheaf of photographs Professor Van Dyke bolsters up his case. The "Wife of Alenson," in Paris, is far more credible as the Backer that he calls it than it is as a Rembrandt. But in the other instances I have cited he carries no conviction whatever.

The explanation cuts deep into the authority of the author. In these matters the imponderables are profoundly important. Models, costumes, modes of composition, technical methods, may all be related to the solidarity of a school and period. It is the subtle, indefinable quality of genius that counts, the matter that you cannot stick a pin through but that you feel instinctively. This is what Professor Van Dyke seems to have missed, a circumstance which I note not only in the chapter on Backer but elsewhere. The harshest but, as it seems to me, the truest thing to say about this book is that it is insensitive, that it wants imaginative insight. Professor Van Dyke seems so curiously blind to what jumps to the eye that his evidence turns against himself. I go on tabulating the luckier hits in his illustrative scheme and I find a few. It is believable that Eeckhout painted the "Ascension" at Munich, as he says, and not Rembrandt. I can sympathetically entertain the idea that the "Portrait of a Man" in the Schwab collection

might better be given to Carel Fabritius than to Rembrandt. The Petrograd "Saskia as Flora" is more probably by Flinck than by Rembrandt. I can follow the argument that gives the "Portrait of an Old Woman," likewise in Russia, to Koninck. But there are two significant points about these various attributions. They make, in the first place, a very slender group, a mere drop in the great sea of Rembrandtesque painting. And secondly they are intrinsically of no great importance. When Professor Van Dyke settles down to strip Rembrandt the removals that seem reasonable have no great meaning. In the larger sphere of the master's activity he leaves me absolutely sceptical.

Reverting to the introductory matter in this catalogue there are one or two remarks that require to be noticed. In disintegrating his "snowball," in taking apart what he designates "the present hodgepodge" embodied in the Rembrandt *œuvre*, Professor Van Dyke is governed by a strange idea. It is so strange that I must quote the author's exact words:

> "The Night Watch," more than any other picture, seems to confirm the tale told by his pictures, that Rembrandt was a portrait painter and little more. He could not do the historical picture in a satisfactory way, and probably after some trials gave it up. I have gone over the figure pictures assigned to him, again and yet again, in the hope that I should find in some one of them the trace of his mind and hand, but I have been almost com-

pletely disappointed. The dramatic, the pathetic, the spectacular, the grotesque things set down to him are the pictures of pupils in which he had no more than a guiding voice — perhaps not even that. There is doubt about even the few compositions that can be set down to him.

One picture alone offers sufficient commentary on this pronouncement, the sublime "Supper at Emmaus" in the Louvre, a picture which Professor Van Dyke himself admits is a Rembrandt and characterizes as "of much emotional feeling and great pathos." If there is one thing more than another which is disclosed in the Shakespearian pell-mell of Rembrandt's works it is that he was a master of great creative imagination, ranging from low comedy to tragic solemnity. It is Professor Van Dyke's unawareness of this that largely vitiates his thesis. This is, I repeat, an insensitive book. The author's sense is sealed where the inner fires of Rembrandt's genius are concerned. Teasing his mind with surface matters, he remains untouched by paintings from which greatness emanates with a kind of tangible electric force. Repeatedly as I trace his path through the *œuvre* I see how it is just the magic of Rembrandt that is forever eluding him.

He does not see that the "Tobias and the Angel," in the Louvre, which he would give to Bol, has infinitely more energy in it than the "Three Marys" of Bol placed beside it. Over and over again I note this Rembrandtesque superiority in the picture which

the author would take from the master and give to the pupil; there is a perceptible lift in vitality, in quality, in beauty, and it is particularly noticeable in those very paintings which, from their subjects, Professor Van Dyke would give to pupils. The "Blinding of Samson," at Frankfort, is a case in point. It is a work of thrilling *furia*, one of the most impressively dramatic things Rembrandt ever painted. Professor Van Dyke finds it coarse and brutal in technic, and in giving it to Horst adds that it "represents Horst rather at his worst." Now, that I differ from Professor Van Dyke on the merits of this work is not the point on which I would dwell. What I more especially commend to the reader is a comparison of the "Samson" with the recognized works of Horst. How Professor Van Dyke can regard it as supporting his argument is simply incomprehensible. The artist of the Frankfort "Samson" is obviously a bold, swinging technician, a master of the brush, a powerful painter. The artist of the "Isaac Blessing Jacob," reproduced beside the "Samson," which is to say Gerrit Horst, is obviously a mediocrity. He couldn't have painted the "Samson." Neither could he have painted the Petrograd "Danae," which the author would take away from Rembrandt to give to him.

When I say that at times this critic is merely "incomprehensible" I am not speaking lightly, but out of a genuine bewilderment. An instance is supplied

by his comment on the masterpiece at Dresden, "Manoah's Offering." I remember that painting as I might remember a great strain of organ music. The genius of Rembrandt fairly glows in it. Professor Van Dyke says: "The picture (as regards the two figures) is superb. I tried to fit it in the Rembrandt group again and again, but without success. It is too black in the shadows, too hard in the contours." He prefers to think it by an unidentified pupil. All this, I maintain, is incomprehensible. Suppose we grant, for the sake of argument (though I am not otherwise inclined to do so), that the shadows are too black, the contours too hard, the light uncertain, the angel poorly drawn. What does all that amount to against the overwhelmingly Rembrandtesque beauty and style of the picture? And why assume that he was impeccable and that an imperfection condemned a picture as not his? Professor Van Dyke holds oddly contradictory views on this point. On page 20 we are permitted to believe that Rembrandt was not "always and infallibly right." On page 107 we are told where the real Rembrandts proclaim themselves — "they are absolutely right from start to finish." That is a fearfully dangerous attitude to take toward any master. No master invariably strikes twelve. Rembrandt didn't do so. But, as Professor Van Dyke himself observes, "some touch of his genius will be apparent in his most indifferent performance." Unfortunately, the author's decisions seem to be based

on the point of view I have cited from page 107. He has a preconceived notion of the typical authentic Rembrandt as a thing "absolutely right from start to finish," and apparently when a picture fails to meet this touchstone he straightway assigns it to some one else, even if it must be, as in the case of "Manoah's Offering," an unidentified pupil. All the time the Rembrandts go on glowing, if I may so express it, proclaiming their authenticity not by flawlessness in detail but by the organic life in them, the accent of power they bear.

I cannot too often reiterate that in this "accent of power" lies the crux of the matter. In the conventional and I fear rather superficial view of the matter the art expert has some sources of knowledge unavailable to the vulgar, which enables him to decide absolutely as to the authenticity of a given picture. This is a fallacy. Knowledge of a master's works in detail, extending to nuances of color, habits of composition, character of surface, peculiarities of brushwork, and so on, will carry him far and enable him to dogmatize where the layman is left dumb. But when he has studied all these things, when he has documented his picture to the utmost, he must admit, if he is honest, that what finally determines his judgment is the operation of his instinct. Bode must depend upon that. That, in the long run, is what Professor Van Dyke must depend upon, and that, I feel more and more as I study his book, is where he

is unreliable. I have been at pains to tabulate some of his attributions and will give the list here, stating the name of the Rembrandt, the place where it hangs and the painter to whom Professor Van Dyke ascribes it:

"Portrait of Titus." Metropolitan Museum. B. Fabritius.

"Portrait of Woman." National Gallery, London. B. Fabritius.

"Hendrickje Stoffels." Metropolitan Museum. B. Fabritius.

"Portrait of Man." Frick Collection. B. Fabritius.

"Man With Golden Helmet." Berlin Museum. Aert de Gelder.

"An Oriental." Metropolitan Museum. Solomon Koninck.

"Old Woman Cutting Her Nails." Metropolitan Museum. Nicolaes Maes.

"Portrait of Woman." National Gallery, London. Nicolaes Maes.

"An Architect." Cassel Gallery. Nicolaes Maes.

"Portrait of Man." Metropolitan Museum. Nicolaes Maes.

"Portrait of Girl." Art Institute, Chicago. Unidentified pupil.

The list might be extended, but I select the foregoing pictures because they are illustrated in the book, and may therefore easily be referred to by the reader. Let him make the comparisons that Professor Van Dyke makes, and let him be especially careful to remember the "accent of power" to which

I have ventured to call his attention. I should be surprised if he did not invariably find it present in the pictures named, in vivid contrast to the quality of the pupil in each case cited by the author. On two pictures in particular I find it irresistible to pause. One is the exquisite "Portrait of Titus," at the Metropolitan Museum, given by Professor Van Dyke to Bernaert Fabritius. It is one of the loveliest portraits of youth in all European painting. It has extraordinary psychological interest, and technically there rests upon it what I can only describe as a Rembrandtesque bloom, a fairly magnificent patina. Bernaert Fabritius never in his life painted anything half so flowerlike, so masterly. If there is one other attribution made by Professor Van Dyke which more than this one falls to the ground as emphatically not proved, it is that which he essays in the matter of the "Old Woman Cutting Her Nails."

Professor Van Dyke begins by attacking it — very unjustly, I think — in technical details. The lights, he says, are forced and out of value. The shadows are too dark. The nose "jumps" forward. The handling is hasty, heavy, ineffective. The drawing is not correct. Then the model resembles a model used by Nicolaes Maes many times. Ergo, the "Old Woman Cutting Her Nails" is by Nicolaes Maes. To clinch the matter the author reproduces beside this picture the "Sleeping Woman," by Maes, in the Brussels Museum. Only he doesn't clinch it at all,

for, with that fantastic blindness to which I am compelled to allude again and yet again, this critic misses the perfectly obvious fact that the "Old Woman Cutting Her Nails" has a breadth, a monumental majesty, a cloudy splendor, to which Maes never even remotely approximated. Rembrandt's old woman in this picture has the imposing grandeur of an antique statue. Her dignity superbly triumphs over the technical details which Professor Van Dyke so grossly exaggerates. And the painting has, above all things, that indefinable cachet to which I am always returning, the cachet of genius, the cachet of Rembrandt. Do not stop at the comparison the author makes between this work and the three pictures by Maes he prints on the same page. Consider the *œuvre* of Maes in its length and breadth. Include such thoroughly characteristic things of his as "The Listening Girl," at Buckingham Palace. Look to the core of each painter's character. You cannot avoid the conclusion that Maes could no more have painted the "Old Woman Cutting Her Nails" than that he could have pulled himself up by his bootstraps.

There is something deeply interesting about the manner in which Professor Van Dyke's comparisons recoil upon himself. The master is too strong for him.

> Others abide our question. Thou art free.
> We ask and ask. Thou smilest and art still.

Thus Shakespeare in Arnold's sonnet. Thus Rembrandt as the iconoclast seeks to rob him of some of his noblest achievements.

Traversing the lists of works which Professor Van Dyke would give to the pupils, I come back with heightened curiosity to the list to which he would confine Rembrandt, the restricted list which has occasioned all the recent uproar. "Fifty are all that I can now definitely place to his name," he says. But he also says: "The list of Rembrandt pictures which follows does not pretend to completeness. Some of the works attributed to Rembrandt are in private hands, where I have not been able to see them." I rub my eyes. The thing seems almost incredible. Here is a book which undertakes to sift the *œuvre* of Rembrandt; the author draws up a list of the pictures which he "can now definitely place to his name"; he assails what may be called the recognized canon of the master's works, and yet he does not "pretend to completeness"! Completeness, in the circumstances, amounts to a point of honor. Is it fair to attempt to riddle the integrity of the admitted *œuvre* and then to leave quantities of the pictures that make it outside the inquest, hanging, so to say, in mid-air? Professor Van Dyke observes that "to gain a right conception of Rembrandt, Bol, Eeckhout or Horst it is not necessary to run down and catalogue every indifferent head or half-finished picture of their doing." He thinks that his list of fifty "will give a

comprehension of the man almost as well as a hundred." It is as though a literary historian were to announce a theory that Balzac had been served by a corps of ghosts and give us for touchstones nothing but "Père Goriot" and "Seraphita." It may not be necessary to run down, as Professor Van Dyke suggests, "every indifferent head or half-finished picture," but what of the great masterpieces? What of "The Shipbuilder and His Wife," at Buckingham Palace; the Devonshire and Westminster Rembrandts, and divers other pieces in England? What of certain pictures here, like the marvellous "Scholar With a Bust of Homer," in the Huntington collection, or Mr. Morgan's great "Nicolaes Ruts," or the "Lucrezia" which the late M. C. D. Borden owned? Professor Van Dyke knows the Frick collection, adding the Ilchester Rembrandt therein to his list, but after a laborious search for anything he might have to say about "The Polish Rider" I have run to earth nothing more than an allusion in a note on another picture — "the 'Polish Rider' which has been attributed to Eeckhout." To give this cavalier treatment to a canvas of the eminence of this one is sheer wanton presumption. After all, there is such a thing as "a decent respect for the opinions of mankind." If Professor Van Dyke thinks that that glorious equestrian portrait is not a Rembrandt, at least he should offer his reasons. He may be dubious about the authority of "experts," but he cannot brush them aside in this

airy fashion — not, at any rate, if he wants his book to be taken seriously.

I do not believe his canon of Rembrandt can be taken seriously. It is too slim and sketchy. Specific subtractions which he would make from the accepted canon in the majority of cases, as I have indicated, remain not proven, and the omissions concerning which he says nothing are too numerous and too important. A canon which merely ignores such outstanding canvases as I have touched upon in the preceding paragraph (and many more could be named) collapses of its own arbitrariness. There is another point which demands comment. There is nothing difficult to believe in the assertion that Rembrandt painted hundreds of pictures. He was that kind of a painter and he lived a fairly long life. What is hard to believe is that that busy career of his produced only about fifty works. The truth is that Rembrandt had the power of a force of nature, pouring forth an immense mass of paintings, drawings, and etchings. There are things in the mass as we know it which doubtless he never saw. Professor Van Dyke, as I have admitted, occasionally bags an error in the accepted canon. But the great bulk of the mass remains unaffected by his book. If there are discrepancies between one picture and another as regards ability they are to be accounted for by the elemental fact that, as I have said, no master always strikes twelve. But there runs through his art like a ground-

swell the energy of genius. It leaves upon his paintings that accent of power which not all the *expertise* in the world can rub out.

It is a mistake to pooh-pooh Professor Van Dyke's book as unworthy of consideration. It is, for the lover of Rembrandt, an intensely interesting production. The *œuvre* constitutes a cosmos of never-ending fascination, and it is always stimulating to explore it anew. Professor Van Dyke is shrewd, ingenious, and ardent. I am sorry for the reader who gets only indignation out of its pages. There is genuine interest to be got out of them. But to be interested is not necessarily to be convinced. The author has written, I imagine, to be discussed. He cannot have the inordinate vanity to expect that his arguments will be swallowed whole simply because he makes them and supplies some photographs to boot. That would be to adopt the preposterous attitude of the experts with whom he so stoutly disagrees. He cannot speak *ex cathedra,* and his book embodies no final judgment, only a series of opinions. They are not by any means conclusive opinions, largely because, with all his excellent equipment, Professor Van Dyke lacks the "seeing eye."

II

PROFESSOR VAN DYKE ON VERMEER

In studying "Rembrandt and His School" I came upon a chapter relating to Vermeer of Delft, that is one of the most curious contributions to the literature of Dutch art I have ever encountered. There is a foreshadowing of it earlier in the book, in the chapter on Carel Fabritius, the master of Vermeer. Apropos of the "Portrait of a Man" at Munich, which the author would take from Rembrandt and give to Fabritius, a reproduction of Vermeer's "Geographer," at Frankfort, is printed. "The same model and some of the pose" were probably used by both painters, Professor Van Dyke thinks, a far-fetched hypothesis and one on which we can build no confidence in the influence which the author here assigns to Fabritius. But I glance at this matter only in passing. What is really interesting is the assertion that "this Fabritius influence is apparent in certain famous portraits put down to Vermeer of Delft hereafter." I turn with zest to the Vermeer chapter, wondering what in the world will develop therein. I find, as has been indicated, an amazing bedevilment of the subject.

The Vermeer *œuvre* has been in debate for a long time. When Burger rescued him from obscurity in 1866 the catalogue terminating his study in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* ran to more than seventy

numbers. That has since been cut almost in half. Van Zype, in his authoritative monograph, gives a list of but thirty-eight works of incontestable authenticity. It may still reasonably be enlarged or diminished. If Professor Van Dyke had some persuasive things to say about it he would be listened to with extreme interest. What he actually has to say only puzzles me. Here is part of it:

Vermeer's pictures have been sought for everywhere — except in the Rembrandt *œuvre*. Perhaps it is not strange that he should appear there, since he was of the Rembrandt school once removed. He was a pupil of Carel Fabritius, who, in turn, was a pupil of Rembrandt. It is by an understanding of Fabritius that we shall possibly arrive at a better understanding of Vermeer. I frankly confess to my inability to follow the Vermeer writers and authorities or agree with the present arrangement of his pictures. I seem to see several painters in the pictures put under Vermeer's name. The small pictures given to him contain things supremely fine and things supremely thin, small, and hard. Such pictures as the "Girl Reading," in the Dresden Gallery, are beyond criticism. The "Young Woman Reading a Letter" and the "Cook," at Amsterdam; the "Lady With a Pearl Necklace," at Berlin; the "Girl at a Window," of the Marquand Collection, Metropolitan Museum, New York, are in the same class of excellence. There are, perhaps, ten or a dozen pictures by this hand. I shall call their painter, for convenience herein, Vermeer No. 1. There are, however, as many more pictures that superficially look to be in the class, but they are brittle, cardboard affairs with false high lights, airless rooms, and color that has no quality. Two pictures, each showing a "Young Woman at the Virginals," in the National Gallery, London; "The Letter,"

at Amsterdam; the "Allegorical Subject," at The Hague, are the illustrations of this latter class. I have called their painter, in my "New Guides," a pseudo-Vermeer, meaning by that that he may be an imitator — some one like Verkolje or Ochtervelt — or possibly Vermeer himself in decline and grown hard in manner. These small pictures form the first group given to Vermeer, and I shall consider them as done by a Vermeer No. 1 and a pseudo-Vermeer.

Vermeer was undoubtedly a pupil of Carel Fabritius, but that is no reason why we should believe that "it is by an understanding of Fabritius that we shall possibly arrive at a better understanding of Vermeer." As well say that, as Whistler was a pupil of Gleyre, who in turn was a pupil of Ingres, it is by an understanding of Gleyre that we shall possibly arrive at a better understanding of Whistler. That would be absurd. Whistler was his own man. Vermeer likewise was his own man, and one of the fascinating things about his art is its establishment of him as a figure apart, a figure extraordinarily detached from the whole Dutch school. The passage I have quoted takes on even stranger turnings. In the game of solitaire that Professor Van Dyke plays, shuffling the cards about and about to see which of them match, he makes some staggering combinations. The pictures which he does not feel sure of he thinks may be by an imitator, or they may be by Vermeer in a declining phase! It is, perhaps, an amusing speculation, but why print it? It comes rather under

the heading of workshop meditations and has no tangible value. Especially because of what follows. Professor Van Dyke goes on to confusion after confusion.

The "Diana," at The Hague, he says, "does not agree with any Vermeer picture of any group," and forthwith he asserts that "it was not done by Vermeer, but by Jacob Van Loo," with certain of whose works he thinks it does agree. It is difficult to be patient over this question of "agreement." Let us suppose, for example, that some Van Dyke of the future were to be set the task of straightening out the *œuvre* of Saint-Gaudens, dislocated by the passage of two or three hundred years. Grant that he has pretty satisfactory evidence about the "Lincoln," the "Farragut," the "Sherman," the "Stevenson," and so on, but has only internal evidence to go on where the Adams monument is concerned. We can imagine what would happen to him if he sought for any obvious "agreement." The Adams monument occupies a place in the sculptor's *œuvre* that is unique. So it is with the nude "Diana" that he made for the tower of the Madison Square Garden. But these two works would, nevertheless, be recognized as his by a really penetrating analyst of his style. In the case of Vermeer, as in that of Rembrandt, Professor Van Dyke uses the most cleverly fabricated machinery but fails to enliven it by the right instinctive spark. The painter he cites in this instance gives him simi-

larities "in subject, type, drawing, grouping." But we have only to put a Van Loo side by side with a Vermeer to see that what the minor man lacks is the master's quality and beauty.

The author proceeds to the great "Procuress," at Dresden. He will give it neither to his Vermeer No. 1 nor to his "pseudo-Vermeer." In order to account for it he calls into being a painter whom he calls Vermeer No. 2. To the same unknown he would assign the "Young Girl," formerly at Brussels, which was in New York for a time, and the "Old Woman" in the Johnson collection, which figures there as a Nicolaes Maes. I know all three of these paintings well and can only feel astonishment at Professor Van Dyke's attitude toward them. The "Procuress" is a glorious picture, glorious in color and in what I can only describe as the Vermeer touch. That is present also, in more jewel-like mood, in the "Young Girl." And why the Johnson picture should be dragged in is a mystery past finding out. Placed beside the "Procuress" it simply crumples up, a mediocre picture beside a brilliant one. But the author has more surprises in store.

He passes next to a painter whom he calls Vermeer No. 3, making great play over the "Portrait of a Woman" at Budapest. With this painting, a masterpiece by Vermeer if ever there was one, he can find no other picture in the Vermeer *œuvre* to "agree," except, possibly, the "Head of a Young Girl" at

The Hague. (So that, also, is to be detached from the real Vermeer!) Hence the "Number 3." He is a distinctly obscure person. "Whether his name is Vermeer or whether he is some other pupil of Carel Fabritius or Rembrandt I am not now able to say." It is extremely doubtful if he will ever be able to speak with greater certainty. Meanwhile he proposes that to this painter shall be given Rembrandt's "Portrait of a Lady" at Petrograd and the two Rembrandts in the Widener collection. As for the robbing of Rembrandt to enrich Vermeer, even an hypothetical Vermeer, I am not for a moment convinced. The Petrograd and Budapest portraits, placed side by side, reveal not resemblances (of handling, of style), but differences. They are clearly not by the same painter, Professor Van Dyke's "Vermeer Number 3" or any other single man. Vermeer, the Vermeer we know, painted the Budapest portrait, and Rembrandt the other. The new attribution which Professor Van Dyke would make in respect to the Widener portraits remains likewise "not proven." Furthermore, he says something about one of these portraits that utterly complicates, as in a climax, the whole complicated business.

We have seen that in the author's view certain works which he would assign to Vermeer No. 1, such as the Marquand Vermeer, are "beyond criticism." They are, it is to be inferred, the authentic Vermeers. But the Widener Rembrandts "are superb portraits,

perhaps by the same hand that did the 'Portrait of a Woman' at Budapest — that is, Vermeer No. 3, the best and greatest of my so-called three Vermeers." You see where we have arrived? There is a Vermeer, a Vermeer we have all known, the Vermeer who painted what we mean when we talk about Vermeer, and his works are "beyond criticism." But all the time there is another Vermeer, one of three, and he, as it happens, is "the best and greatest" of all of them. Both of the Widener portraits, we are told, are "more important in art, more valuable in history, and even in commerce, as Vermeers than as Rembrandts." But as which Vermeers? The Vermeers that are valuable in art, in history, and even in commerce are the Vermeers the world cherishes as such. How can Professor Van Dyke expect to secure the same status for an unknown painter he has invented, even though he calls him by the same name? The Vermeer chapter in this book is, in short, one of the most unfortunate it contains. It does not clarify the subject; it only darkens counsel. In attempting to revise the Vermeer canon, as in attempting to revise the Rembrandt canon, Professor Van Dyke leaves his reader a little more than sceptical.

III

The Thirty-ninth Vermeer

III

THE THIRTY-NINTH VERMEER

EVER since Burger rehabilitated him in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* in 1866, the *œuvre* of Vermeer of Delft has fluctuated in volume under the sifting processes of criticism. Burger's catalogue runs to seventy-three numbers. When Henry Havard published his brochure in 1888, he cut the list down to fifty-six. It has been shortened repeatedly in later years. Van Zype, in the definitive edition of his book, brought out in 1921, accounted for but thirty-eight paintings. One of these, the "Young Girl With a Flute," was discovered by Doctor Bredius as recently as 1906. Vermeer is one of those masters about whom you can say almost anything save that their history has been conclusively written. He is an ever-tantalizing mystery. One never knows when something new of his is going to be brought to light. Apropos of which I would refer to the thirty-ninth Vermeer.

The first news of it reached the world as a discovery made by Doctor C. Hofstede de Groot, the well known Dutch connoisseur. He announced his find in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, explaining that it belonged to M. Yves Perdoux, in Paris. Then it

passed into the possession of Sir Joseph Duveen. The subject is a curly-haired boy in his teens. The hair is dark brown, and enframes a face in which the flesh tints are of a pearly, almost grayish, pallor. The white collar falls over a doublet of yellowish silver gray. The cloak, whose folds make the base of the composition, is of a reddish brown, which Doctor Hofstede de Groot allies with color in the famous "Christ at the House of Mary and Martha," which has always been reckoned an early work of the master.

The face is drawn and modelled with the fine suavity always characteristic of Vermeer in painting the features of his sitters, but elsewhere the portrait is remarkable for its flowing breadth. The collar is a little miracle of painter-like notation, brushed in with a generous but not too thick impasto and very beautiful in tone. The costume is not otherwise so rich or so resonant in color quality. In this and in the handling it departs from the key which might superficially be assigned to the typical Vermeer. But as a matter of fact he had more than one manner, corresponding to more than one mood. When he made most of his pictures he labored in the spirit of still life and gave a special significance to painted surface as such. The famous Marquand Vermeer in the Metropolitan Museum is an apposite example. When he fell into the stride of pure portraiture, as in the wonderful half-length at Budapest or the curious

HEAD OF A YOUNG BOY

FROM THE PAINTING BY VERMEER

clavecin player in the Beit collection, he got away from his consummate preciosity and thought not only of tone but of a large definition of form. This is the distinguishing point about the Duveen picture.

It hasn't, save in the collar, the jewel-like depth and density of facture which we usually think of when we think of Vermeer. That waits upon the dignity and vitality of the portrait as a whole, upon the broad swing in the workmanship. The master's gift for ensemble comes out nowhere more impressively than in his dealings with the single figure. His design is sometimes fairly monumental in such contributions to this category as the Budapest portrait just mentioned or the great "Dentellière" in the Louvre. If he is not precisely monumental in the "Head of a Young Boy" he at any rate reveals in it a finer sense of scale, a more imposing effect, than is ordinarily associated with the figures in his more familiar interiors. Vermeer didn't paint many portraits. There is a whimsical suggestion in the circumstance that in "Le Peintre," at Vienna, which he may have intended as a memorial of himself, the artist is seated with his back to the spectator. But when he did essay portraiture he had a way of gripping his subject. There is no mistaking the character of the woman at Budapest, or that of the Arenberg "Jeune Fille," or that of the grave gentleman with the mustache in the museum at Brussels. So in the "Head of a Young Boy" he gives us a personality interest-

ing even under the simple traits of adolescence. That is one reason why it is so persuasively a Vermeer; it has so subtle a reality. You feel at once the touch of the master, not only registering a form but evoking a presence.

IV

Leonardo's Legacy of Beauty

IV

LEONARDO'S LEGACY OF BEAUTY

In spite of her precoccupation with the problem of Fiume, Italy found time in 1919 to commemorate the name and fame of Leonardo da Vinci. He died in France on May 2, 1519, and in the four centuries that have elapsed since then there has been only one man of a kindred type of universal genius known to the world, Shakespeare, who died almost a hundred years later. The learned and artistic bodies of Italy hailed him as one of the supreme memories of the nation, and everywhere those who care for the things of the mind shared in their fervor. He is a classic beyond peradventure, and, like all true classics, he embodies ideas and principles in which the most modern of the moderns may renew his artistic vitality.

There are, in a sense, two Leonardos. One is the property of the scholar whose researches are directed more especially into the complex aspects of the subject. In *Scribner's Magazine* at the time of the celebration there was an interesting and valuable paper by Mr. George Sarton, of the Carnegie Institute, on "The Message of Leonardo." He is engaged on the establishment of a standard text of Leonardo's writings, and, accordingly, I was not surprised to find his

essay an analysis of the master's "relation to the birth of modern science." In our time, and in view of its prevailing drifts of thought and activity, there are bound to be many tributes to the scientific aspects of Leonardo's career. Mr. Sarton well brought out their solid importance. In the anticipation of the flying machine, we have only one of a host of points of contact which may be established between the fifteenth century Florentine and ourselves. But the other Leonardo is he who is more quickly brought to mind by mention of his name among people at large in the twentieth century, and he is the property of the lover of beauty. When we speak of "the Leonardesque" we think not of his achievements as scientist but of the ideal of loveliness which he created. It towers above all that the scholars may seek to force upon our attention. It is true that he left behind him but a comparatively small number of works of art, and that he himself, as Mr. Sarton reminds us, was no less proud of being an engineer than of being a painter. Nevertheless, for the bulk of mankind, the paintings and drawings will continue to mean Leonardo as the plays continue to mean Shakespeare.

The only portrait we have of him is the drawing in the library at Turin, which shows us the head of an old man, and the power of the association of ideas is such that one hardly ever thinks of him save as an aged type of wisdom. He appeals to the imagination

not simply as old in knowledge and thought, indeed, but as a kind of ancient seer, a mystic, living aloof from the common world. Yet it is desirable to check such an impression, to keep a firm grasp upon the very human foundations of this colossal genius. His manuscripts yield a helpful passage in the note he writes apropos of one of the apprentices he was wont to take into his *bottega* at five lire the month. "Giacomo came to live with me on the Feast of St. Mary Magdalen, 1490," he says. "He was ten years old. The second day I ordered two shirts, a pair of hose, and a doublet for him. When I put aside the money to pay for these things he took it out of my purse. I was never able to make him confess the robbery, although I was certain of it. A thieving, lying, pigheaded glutton." Remembrance of the every-day side of life which these lines illustrate will keep the student from visualizing Leonardo too much as a rapt Olympian, with his singing robes always about him. He went to and fro among men in homespun, so to say, with an intensely human curiosity about all the things of the visible world. If he painted the "Mona Lisa" and "The Last Supper" he drew also the most appalling profiles of hideous, malformed peasants. When Baroncelli was hanged in Florence for his share in the conspiracy of the Pazzi, Leonardo made a drawing of him at the end of the rope, and something of the dispassionately artistic trend of his temperament is shown by the note he added on the

sheet: "Small tan-colored cap, black satin doublet, lined black jerkin, blue cloak lined with fur of foxes' breasts, and the collar of the cloak covered with velvet speckled black and red; Bernardo di Bandino Baroncelli; black hose." A confirmed realist, we say, must have made that sketch and that note. One can see him ignoring the emotional horror of the spectacle, looking only to the accurate registration of the facts. Most characteristic of all is the touch about the "black hose," hastily jotted down after he had thought the portrait complete.

Leonardo was a realist in that he never undervalued what he could see and touch, handle and measure. He was peculiarly a master of ponderable things. Here it is interesting to turn for a moment to the scientist in him, the man of practical affairs, a famous letter in which he offered his services to the Duke of Milan supplying just the needed light on what we might call the prosaic turn of his mind. "I have a method of constructing very light and portable bridges," he says, "to be used in the pursuit of or retreat from the enemy. I also have most convenient and portable bombs, proper for throwing showers of small missiles, and with the smoke thereof causing great terror to the enemy, to his imminent loss and confusion." In these and in other lines he shows how useful he could be in time of war, and then he goes on as follows: "In time of peace I believe that I could equal any other as regards works

in architecture. I can prepare designs for buildings, whether public or private, and also conduct water from one place to another. Furthermore, I can execute works in sculpture: marble, bronze or terra-cotta. In painting, also, I can do what may be done as well as any other, be he who he may." How revealing, and, again, how human, is that return to the ruling passion, that transition from canal-cutting to the art of the painter! It is profoundly inevitable. The play of Leonardo's intellect knew no boundaries. He studied acoustics. He was a seasoned anatomist. Botany fascinated him, and so on through an alphabetical list one might follow his imagination, ranging through all the interests of man. But, then, we would veer toward the Leonardo who is, as I have said, the property of the scholar. The Leonardo who is the property of the world is the Leonardo who is the property of the artist, the man who is remembered because of the way in which he drew the ripple of a woman's hair athwart her cheek.

As he drew it the searching observation of the realist magnificently sustained him, but in the same instant all that is materialistic in realism fell from him, and he functioned as a poet. The result was a work of art that is incomparably beautiful and that also is, I believe, the most successful manifestation of Leonardo's genius. There is, after all, a sharp distinction to be recognized between his universality and the universality of Shakespeare. The poet, tak-

ing the world for his province, bodied forth creations in which his purpose is clearly realized. His energy is concentrated upon a task which he completes. Leonardo, undeniably putting to his credit specific achievements in science, at the same time varies them with an infinite number of inconclusive experiments. His energy is diffused. It is in his curiosity rather than in the actual things he accomplished that the universality of his mind is declared. He survives in his writings as a Goethe rather than as a Shakespeare. But as an artist he knows no diffusion, no incertitude. There it would seem that he most triumphantly expressed himself. A significant testimony to the fact that he was, indeed, an artist far more centrally than a scientist lies in the paradox that he needed no great mass of works to affirm his immortality in the sphere of painting. The "Leonardesque" lives in a touch. It is an ideal of beauty communicated through the channel of a style.

Legend clusters around the "Mona Lisa," and famous tributes to that portrait, composed by such skilful writers as Gautier and Pater, have led thousands to the conviction that in this painting as in no other the quintessence of the Leonardesque is to be found. It is there, of course, but it also is in other works, and some of them offer perhaps a simpler path to his secret. It was the secret of exquisitely subtle expression, of delineating the facts of nature with so spiritualized a grace that the facts take on a

kind of divinity. Leonardo had it in the time of his pupilage, when he painted the celebrated angel in the foreground of Verrocchio's "Baptism of Christ." He had it all his life long. Through all the multifarious activities of his career he was the clairvoyant draftsman, using his art as though it were a sort of magic in the service of pure beauty. As a painter he employed color and tone as subtly as in the drawings he employed line. The "Virgin and Child With Saint Anne," in the Louvre, is even more comprehensible than the "Mona Lisa" as an instance of his powers of expression. It is clothed in beauty as in a vaporous garment. The forms are defined with an almost melting suavity. The style would remain merely sensuous in another hand. With Leonardo all that is sensuous in it is raised to a higher power, made spiritual. Because he was a complete technician he could do anything, and among the drawings which are indispensable to study of his art there are many which reveal in him a tremendous power. Battle scenes, for example, notably inspired him. He could draw their broad movement, and he could draw the faces of individual fighters, distorted by passion. But it is in his finer subjects that he leaves the finest impression. The "Head of Christ" in the Brera is a miracle of beauty because it is a miracle of tenderness. We are thrilled by the swinging strength in the great "Head of a Warrior" in the British Museum, but we are bewitched and haunted by those heads of women and

maidens, scattered through the galleries of Europe, in which Leonardo unites to what he sees in life a beauty of which we feel he must have dreamed.

It is an infinitely delicate beauty, sprung from truth, but refined to a point which leaves it, indeed, well-nigh beyond interpretation in words. Leonardo flings it over the heads of his feminine types; he plays with it unceasingly, as I have indicated, in defining the tendrils of their hair. Over mouth and eyes and other features it hovers like a sacred atmosphere. A hand or an arm, as he draws it, is more than a bodily appurtenance; it is the vehicle for a kind of æsthetic enchantment. Alluding to these studies of details that he made I feel tempted to linger on the force of his technic, the superb knowledge at the bottom of his treatment of form, of drapery. But everything is used by this tremendous realist as a means to an end — the evocation of beauty. Never did a technician more steadily throw us back upon the subtler elements of his work. It is in these that the modern artist has his lesson. Leonardo sets before him an heroic standard of workmanship. He was, in mastery of the processes of art, a positive demigod. As a draftsman, for example, Michael Angelo alone is his peer. It is hopeless to try to match him, to borrow his skill. But "the Leonardesque," considered as an inspiration, has had and must always have a marvellously leavening influence. There were Renaissance painters in Lombardy who recaptured

something of its glow. In the paintings of Boltraffio, of Cesare da Sesto, of Solario and others you can see how his tenderness, his grace, his spiritualization of tangible things were extraordinarily emulated. No one in his senses could imagine their revival to-day in terms modelled closely upon Leonardo's practice. The time for that kind of emulation is gone. But in recalling us to beauty he performs a service by which the modern artist can profit as well as did the artist of the Renaissance. Leonardo, who could delineate with overwhelming eloquence the ugliness of life and the terror of death, has left us, more than anything else, a tradition of the radiant, flower-like loveliness that is to be found in nature and that can be expressed in art. In my own sense of him I reckon with nothing as with his unmistakable belief that beauty is the goal of the artist. The proof of its validity lies in his works — for all men to see.

V

Raphael and the Art of Portrait Painting

V

RAPHAEL AND THE ART OF PORTRAIT PAINTING

Among the anecdotes relating to Ingres which have come down to us there is one illustrating the attitude that he held toward his demigod Raphael. He sat at dinner with his friend Thiers, and the latter undertook to demonstrate that the fame of the Italian master rested chiefly upon his Madonnas. Ingres was furious. "I would give them all," he exclaimed; "yes, monsieur, all of them, for a fragment of the 'Disputa' or of the 'School of Athens' or of the 'Parnassus.'" The episode is symbolical of a conflict which has long persisted in the modern world of taste. If the "Sistine Madonna" is the most famous painting in the world, it is because it embodies the most universally appealing of all pictorial ideas of the mother of Christ. It seems conclusively to exalt Raphael as an interpreter of sentiment both human and divine. But that very painting points to the equally potent element in his genius which accounts for the enthusiasm of Ingres; the "Sistine Madonna" is nothing if not a masterpiece of design. It reveals the same transcendent power of composition which makes immortal the decorations in the Vatican.

Nevertheless the conflict aforementioned will still go on. Laymen will think first of the Madonnas. Artists return to the mural paintings. In the meantime, of course, Raphael's art remains all of a piece, and true appreciation of it depends upon our realization of the unity binding together its different aspects. He was one of the most versatile men who have ever lived. The important thing is to follow him sympathetically into every field, and then to seize upon the central force which animated him in them all.

The American student has had the opportunity to study here one of Raphael's important religious subjects ever since Pierpont Morgan placed the Colonna "Virgin and Child Enthroned with Saints" in the Metropolitan Museum. Now there seems to be every likelihood that we will have in this country a monument to a very different phase of the master's activity. In the spring of 1925 there was a tremendous to-do in the press over the purchase by the Duveens of a great portrait by Raphael. It belonged to a collector in Berlin, Mr. Oscar Huldschinsky. His sale of it grievously excited the Germans, who looked upon it as one of the national treasures, and its exportation, if that had been heard of in time, might possibly have been prevented. However, it got to London. Once in this country it is almost certain to be acquired by an American collector, and, though it would then pass to a private gallery, precedent justifies the supposition that sooner or later one of our

RAPHAEL

FROM THE PORTRAIT BY SEBASTIANO DEL PIOMBO

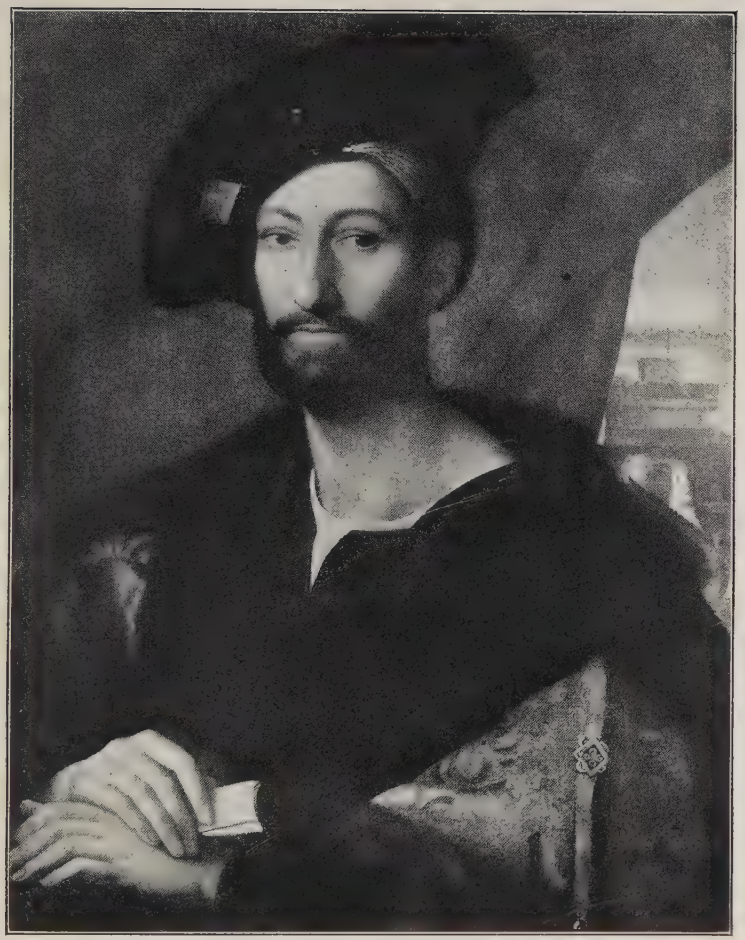
museums will possess it. It would be a little more than welcome, for it would serve to enlighten the student where most he needs enlightenment as regards Raphael, that is, on his purely human side, on that side which brings him down from the clouds and makes the Prince of Painters one of the raciest figures of the Renaissance. The Raphael of legend is a portent, a worker of miracles, who in a brief life of thirty-seven years achieved a mass of work — most of it flawless — large enough to have occupied several giants of art through a period three times as long. But he was a man like other men, save for his genius, and his work is to be apprehended in very human terms. That is where his portraiture helps.

This example of it is a portrait of Giuliano de Medici to which Vasari refers as one hanging in his time in the palace of Ottaviano de Medici at Florence. From that home it disappeared for centuries, nothing being known of it save a copy by Alessandro Allori in the Uffizi. Then, some time in 1866 or 1867, the German critic Liphart went one day with the Grand Duchess Marie of Russia to the house of a Signor Brini in Florence, to look at some paintings that he had to sell. They were struck by this portrait of Giuliano, and after the dust upon it had been sponged off, were only the more impressed. Brini apparently did not regard it as of exceptional importance. He could not have paid very much for it when he had got it from the firm of Baldovinetti, for he sold it to the

Duchess at what Liphart characterizes as a very modest price. She took it to her villa at Quarto, and she brought in the restorer Tricca, who transferred the canvas, and in the process of cleaning it discovered the initials of the painter and the fragments of a date. In 1901 the Duchess sent the portrait to Paris, where Eugene Muntz, one of the biographers of Raphael, pronounced it the lost portrait of Giuliano de Medici, Duke of Nemours. Later Doctor Bode confirmed this opinion. We next hear of it as belonging to the Sedelmeyers in Paris, and then in the gallery of Mr. Huldschinsky.

Giuliano, the younger brother of Leo X, was lucky in his artists. Michael Angelo made his stupendous monument in the sacristy at San Lorenzo, and Raphael painted this portrait. I must quote most of what Crowe and Cavalcaselle have to say about it, for it revives something of the atmosphere in which it was produced, besides throwing some light upon the subject of the painting:

> Giuliano de Medici was the highest personage in the Papal State for whom Raphael could paint a likeness. All the arts of Leo X had been exerted to raise this prince to a station worthy of his birth and pretensions. He was Duke of Nemours in the peerage of France; the Pope had given him a principality, Louis XII a wife of royal lineage. The marriage took place early in February, 1515, and Giuliano returned to Rome to form a court over which his wife presided. Within less than five months after these events occurred, the French Duke was commanding



Guiliano de Medici, Duke of Nemours

from the portrait by raphael

the papal forces against France. Illness alone prevented him from leading the troops in person, and a fatal decline soon deprived him of his life. But before leaving Rome, Giuliano had apparently had the wish to leave a portrait behind him which should adorn his wife's drawing-room. Raphael, as the Duke's "familiar," was selected to paint it. . . .

Giuliano's repute is good among the princes of the Medicean house. He is said to have been weak. But he had a quality which other members of his family wanted. He was grateful to those who had favored him in adversity. His features, handed down to us in several examples, are of the genuine Medicean type, including a long hooked nose, almond-shaped eyes, and a beard and mustache kept short to suit a small chin and upper lip. Great breadth and flatness marked the plane of the cheeks, which, in every extant specimen, are seen at three-quarters to the left, with an oval black eyeball looking to the right. According to the fashion of the period, a coif of golden net drawn obliquely over the head to the level of the left ear, and a wide toque set aslant over the right ear, leave the whole of the forehead bare. A ticket of lozenge shape and three gold buckles are affixed to the toque. The low dress displays a long neck fringed with the border of a white shirt covered by a red vest, all but hidden by a black doublet over which a fawn-colored watered silk pelisse is thrown, adorned with a collar and facings of brown fur. A black patch conceals the forefinger of the left hand, which lies on a table partly hidden by the right, holding a letter. . . . A green hanging half conceals an opening through which the sky appears cut out by the broken outline of the Castle of St. Angelo, to which the secret approach is shown by a covered way.

There is a significant phrase employed in the foregoing passage, the one designating Raphael as the

duke's "familiar." It recalls us to the splendor of the painter's life, his intimacy with popes and all their gorgeous satellites. His biographers glance at the notabilities who were his sitters, not only the princes of the church but statesmen, diplomatists, and poets. He would portray not only such men as Julius and Leo but a lettered courtier like Castiglione. His net embraced all manner of men. He had but one prejudice as regards a sitter. As Muntz remarks, "the artist was unwilling to transmit to posterity the features of any but those who were worthy of sympathy or admiration." I am strongly tempted to pause upon this matter of Raphael's discrimination, and especially to pursue him as a denizen of the highest circles in Roman society. But it is well to diverge here upon the foundations of his work in portraiture. It is well to go back to his pupilage, to those early years in which he felt the influences of Timoteo Viti and Perugino. He has left portraits of both painters, a superb drawing of Viti in the British Museum, and a similarly moving head and shoulders of Perugino in the Borghese Gallery at Rome. The first is particularly to be admired just for its broad, sweeping draftsmanship, but the thing that still further touches the imagination in both portraits is their intense realism. Raphael's portraits, indeed, from the very beginning, completely expose the fallacy of regarding him as even tinctured by that unreality which we associate with so-called "academic"

art. I recall an odd conversation about these portraits with a very capable artist. They were, no doubt, very fine, he said, but it was a great pity that Raphael "didn't know how to paint." Seeing me rather stunned by this cryptic remark, he hastened to add that, of course, what he meant was that Raphael was neither a Rembrandt nor a Manet, that the Italian didn't know anything about brush-work. I have to smile a little when I remember that and think of the sheer technical *maestria* in the portraits I have just mentioned, the linear breadth in the "Viti" and the nervous flowing brush-work in the "Perugino." The truth is that Raphael is only superficially an artist of an academic cast. Essentially he was as keen a realist as any in the history of art.

Look only to that question of school currents, of formative influences, of which the exhaustive historian is bound to make so much, and you get to thinking of Raphael as dabbling in more or less abstract principles all his life long. Trace him from his labors in Umbria under Perugino and Pintoricchio, watch him as he is stirred by the magic of Leonardo, observe him shrewdly taking a leaf from the book of Fra Bartolommeo, and study above all the impetus he draws from contact with the manner of Michael Angelo. You forthwith call him an eclectic, which is a freezing enough label to affix to any man, and you wonder how through all those mutations he had anything to do with life. He had everything to do

with it, as the portraits in particular clearly show. They testify to nothing so much as to the master's grasp upon the deep sources of vitality, the thrilling actuality with which he could endue his every stroke. There is an apposite passage in a letter of Bembo's to Bibbiena. "Raphael," he says, "has painted a portrait of our Tebaldeo, which is so natural that it seems more like him than he is himself." His contemporaries put his realism among the first of his merits. Vasari, paying a tribute akin to that of Bembo, writes these words, in the course of his comments on the decorations in the Vatican: "And at this time, when he had gained a very great name, he also made a portrait of Pope Julius in a picture in oils, so true and so lifelike that the portrait caused all who saw it to tremble, as if it had been the living man himself." In this matter of embodying a formidable personality in a portrait I know of nothing more impressive, not even the great "Innocent X" of Velasquez. There must have been something in portraiture which poignantly appealed to Raphael, for even when he was dealing with personages long dead and gone he had a way of lending to his images of them an extraordinary verisimilitude. When he painted the Vatican decorations he had to deal with numerous historical figures, with Sappho and Plato, with Virgil and Pindar, with Ptolemy. The task never gave him a moment's hesitation. He painted them with a vividness that makes them seem almost his

contemporaries. Speaking of the "Parnassus," Vasari says: "There are portraits from nature of all the most famous poets, ancient and modern, and some only just dead or still living in his day; which were taken from statues or medals, and many from old pictures, and some who were still alive, portrayed from the life by himself." It is like Vasari to speak of them all as "portraits from nature," for no matter what he used, whether a document or the living model, Raphael made a living and breathing presentment of his subject. When he had the model before him he was merely incomparable, as witness the portrait of Bramante introduced into the foreground of "The School of Athens." As you may see from the sheet of drawings in the Louvre, when he came to study the lineaments of his architectural friend he got such a grip upon them that they seem fairly to vibrate with character. Over and over again Vasari returns to this motive. He loves to speak of the power that Raphael had "to give such resemblance to portraits that they seem to be alive, and that it is known whom they represent." I confess that I find it hard not to emulate Vasari, lingering repeatedly on the simple truth, the almost artless animation, in Raphael's portraits. One point that is pertinent I cannot neglect. It is the triumph of this truth over the purely decorative motive pursued as an end in itself. It is especially noticeable in his portraits of women, such as the "Maddalena Doni," the "Donna

Velata," and the "Joanna of Aragon." They have a freedom and a solidity making them strangely predominant over the typical Florentine profile, consummately exquisite though that may be.

His genius was too great to wear the shackles of a convention, to be confined within the linear bounds of a pattern. But I indicated at the outset of these remarks that Raphael's genius was all of a piece, that one pervasive inspiration went to the painting of the Madonnas, the decorations, and the portraits. To return to that issue is to enforce the unity of Raphael's art by exposing its corner-stone where the portraits are concerned. He couldn't have sustained in them that virtue of lifelikeness on which I have dwelt if he had not known how to build for it a perfect scaffolding of design. That is where the painter of three great types of pictorial art affirmed himself a master of one great secret. It is the secret of composition. Raphael had it in its simplest form when he made his early four-square portrait of Perugino. Rapidly he developed it and richly exploited it, achieving, as he placed a figure within the rectangle, the same freshness and felicity which you observe in such a decorative gem of his as the "Jurisprudence." Look at the "Angelo Doni," look at the "Cardinal Bibbiena," look at the "Baldassare Castiglione" and look finally at the "Giuliano de Medici." If they throb with human life, their beauty springs also from the supreme composition that is in them.

Raphael could meet, through his grasp upon that art, the last test of the portrait-painter. He could make of a portrait a really great picture. The point is appreciated by Vasari when he comes to describe the famous "Leo X with Two Cardinals," now in the Pitti:

> In Rome he made a picture of good size, in which he portrayed Pope Leo, Cardinal Giulio de Medici, and Cardinal de Rossi. In this the figures appear to be not painted but in full relief; there is the pile of the velvet, with the damask of the Pope's vestments shining and rustling, the fur of the linings soft and natural, and the gold and silk so counterfeited that they do not seem to be in color, but real gold and silk. There is an illuminated book of parchment which appears more real than the reality; and a little bell of wrought silver which is more beautiful than words can tell. Among other things, also, is a ball of burnished gold on the Pope's chair, wherein are reflected, as if it were a mirror (such is its brightness), the light from the windows, the shoulders of the Pope, and the walls round the room. And all these things are executed with such diligence that one may believe without any manner of doubt that no master is able, or is ever likely to be able, to do better.

Was any other master ever able to do better? Muntz seems to have been a little in doubt. "Nor can we place before him," he says, "any but the greatest masters of portraiture, such as Jan van Eyck, Holbein, Titian, Velasquez, Van Dyck, and Rembrandt." For my own part, I cannot see why any of these save Rembrandt should be placed "be-

fore" Raphael in portraiture. The Dutchman, to be sure, is *hors concours*. No one in the whole range of portraiture can touch him for pathos, for the dramatic, even tragic, presentation of character. But for the rest, Raphael's portraits seem to me to stand among the greatest. They do so by virtue of force in characterization, distinction in design, and, above all, a certain serene beauty.

VI

Religious Painting

VI

RELIGIOUS PAINTING

An exhibition held not long ago in New York set me thinking anew on an old subject. It was one of pictures by Mr. H. Siddons Mowbray, and the subject they brought up was that of religious painting. The artist dealt with the life of Christ. He did so in a remarkably persuasive manner. Mr. Mowbray is a good draftsman and a good designer. His episodes were composed with both dignity and vitality, and his justly organized groups were set against a deep blue background realistically enough and at the same time with a decorative felicity recalling the traditions of Pintoricchio and the earlier Florentines. This was a fairly long and well-sustained flight in Biblical illustration. There were fifteen panels given to the main theme, with several others allied to the series. They were beautiful and convincing. They disclosed true devotional emotion. Their technical merits, too, were impressive, but what especially interested me was that they should have been painted at all, that in the present period, dedicated to the apotheosis of materialism, an artist should arise devoting himself to the delineation of purely spiritual realities. The incident revived the whole problem of

religious art and the change which has come over its fortunes with the passing of the centuries.

I remember puzzling over this problem years ago in the sacristy of the cathedral at Montauban before that "Vow of Louis XIII" which is one of the most ambitious of the religious paintings of Ingres. I am an Ingres man and ready, I suppose, if anybody is, to meet him half-way. But I confess that despite the elements of grandeur in this composition it would not occur to me to cite it among the great pictures of the Madonna. He returned to Scriptural subjects again and again. Witness the "Christ before the Doctors" at Montauban. Witness the "Virgin and the Sacred Host" in its two versions, one of them in the Louvre, or the "Christ Committing to Peter the Keys of Paradise" in the same museum. But I have never seen those things without amusedly recalling the retort of Ingres, cited earlier in these pages, when Thiers tried to prove to him that the Madonnas of Raphael constituted his chief title to fame. "I would give them all," cried the artist, "for a fragment of the 'Disputa.'" Who would not give all of the religious paintings by Ingres for one of his nudes? For my own part I feel that way not only about Ingres but about most of the more devoutly minded men of his generation and later in France, and in England too. Flandrin and Ary Scheffer were elevated spirits but never triumphant masters. Puvis alone climbed the heights, yet, when all is said, one

reveres him rather as a great decorator than as an interpreter of Scriptural story; his indubitable inspiration is poetic rather than divine. When you glance cursorily over the rank and file in France you are arrested here and there by interesting things. You note a memorable "Madonna" by Dagnan-Bouveret. You find Cazin, of all people in the world, painting a "Hagar and Ishmael." You discover Béraud portraying a Biblical scene in sensationally modern terms, or you come upon the famous illustrations of Tissot. Bouguereau once painted a "Madonna" in his polished academic way, and it wasn't a bad picture — in its polished academic way. I could go on indefinitely enumerating French excursions into this field. But hardly any of them are fundamentally pertinent to this discussion. I can recall only two modern Frenchmen who have seemed to me to be imbued with authentic religious emotion. One of them was Millet, when he painted "The Angelus." The other is that brilliant satirist of our own time, Forain, who has drawn from the Bible compositions of a Rembrandtesque poignancy.

The failure of England in this matter is curious, for the genius of the race, addicted in literature at least to the play of ideas, would seem to be peculiarly favorable to the development of religious painting. Why did not George Frederick Watts conclusively prove it? To the painter of "Love and Death," to say nothing of divers other imaginative conceptions,

it would seem as if anything might have been possible. And why did not the Pre-Raphaelites put the subject on a firmer basis? Holman Hunt created a certain furore in his own country with "The Light of the World." One of the best of Rossetti's paintings is one of the earliest, his charming "Ecce Ancilla Domini," of 1850. But in England, as across the Channel, the status of religious art is essentially subordinate. It is a striking historical circumstance — in the assertion of which I might or might not have foreign support — that the greatest religious painting of our own time was produced by an American, the late John La Farge. His "Ascension" in the church of that name in New York is a veritably sublime work of art. We are a strange people, sometimes very slow to appreciate our own, and I am not at all sure that as many Americans know of this masterpiece as know of, say, Munkácsy's "Christ before Pilate." But I would defy anybody to name any religious painting of its epoch anywhere in the world that is comparable to it in beauty and grandeur. I can hear some reader murmuring at this point: "Well, if an American was the greatest religious painter of his time, why isn't America the scene of more and better religious painting?" There is an obvious answer. It is only once in so often, anywhere, that a John La Farge is born. Incidentally, that answer excites many reflections on the broad problem to which I have referred, the relation of religious painting to a given period.

It has often, I think, been grievously misunderstood because of the error made in ascribing to a given period a talismanic potency that it never possessed. The unwary student, happily beguiled by the glamour of an innocent world, conceives of mediæval mysticism as a kind of holy elixir imbibed by generations of painters. It is as easy as it is delightful to fall into this misconception. Certain types like the Sienese and Florentine Primitives irresistibly invite it. An age of faith and nothing else is mirrored in the tenderness of a Duccio or a Giotto. There is something pervadingly celestial about early Italian art. The pictures of Fra Angelico are of so much saintliness all compact, and the man is as childlike as the spirit of his immortal work. Seeing the tremendous force of religious exaltation by which his art and that of a host of his contemporaries were energized, it is natural to assume that exaltation as exclusively animating a school. The student comes to think of it as a kind of general, communal possession. It was, as a matter of fact, an element depending for its perfect exploitation wholly upon the individual, a truism which, as I have said, is sometimes overlooked.

These observations are assuredly not directed at the revival of ancient scandals. I have no disposition to dip the brush in earthquake and eclipse, retelling sad stories of the death of private reputations. But I may be permitted to touch upon the classical in-

stance of Fra Filippo Lippi and his well-known levity. Vasari has some drastic things to say upon the painter's more earthy mood and adds the following passage: "When he was in this humor he gave little or no attention to the works that he had undertaken; wherefore, on one occasion Cosimo de Medici, having commissioned him to paint a picture, shut him up in his own house, in order that he might not go out and waste his time; but, after staying there for two whole days, one night he cut some ropes out of his bed sheets with a pair of scissors and let himself down from a window, and then abandoned himself for many days to his pleasures." A scurvy wretch, no doubt, as he lives in the pages of Vasari or in Browning's poem. Human; in short, one of the most human creatures that ever lived! It is for that that I signalize him. It is not his peccadilloes that make him representative but his humanness; he was a man before he was a mystic.

It is the story of the whole of Renaissance painting. Religious exaltation was a part, but only a part, of religious painting at its zenith, and sometimes it was only vicariously present, so to say. I can imagine the words of John Milton on the lips of Fra Angelico:

> —What in me is dark
> Illumine, what is low raise and support;
> That, to the highth of this great argument,
> I may assert Eternal Providence,
> And justify the ways of God to men.

I cannot for the life of me imagine this cry from the depths on the lips of, for example, Titian, the bosom friend of Aretino. One must lay hold of another clew to the majesty of great religious painting. You find it, looking to the human aspect of the question, in the conception of the painter as primarily a craftsman and a temperament. The church was there to supply the theme and the occasion. The artist was there to make the most of both according as he was a man of imagination and, transcendently, a man of his hands. There is no such thing, says Swinburne, as an inarticulate poet. There is no such thing as a great painter who cannot paint — and paint superlatively well. He must feel, too, he must have creative power, yet the tale of his exploits is all sound and fury if it is not a tale of his craftsmanship. I know of no more moving illustration than that supplied by the "Sistine Madonna." By some fantastic slip of the memory Ingres must have forgotten that when he offered to give all of Raphael's "Madonnas" for a fragment of the "Disputa." He was thinking of Raphael as the prodigious designer, draftsman, and master of form, and he forgot for the moment that in the "Sistine Madonna" Raphael is the consummate exemplar of all three elements. The picture survives as a triumph of religious exaltation and an interpretation of divine motherhood chiefly because, to express it bluntly, it is so magnificently and monumentally put together, because the man who made it was so intensely the artist.

Religious art is so much the more quickly and refreshingly appreciated if one begins by grasping it from within in these more tangible aspects of its character. Its beauty is the more thrilling as it deepens, and takes on more of spiritual mystery, but that very mystery only grows the more enkindling as you search out the fabric of personal and technical traits on which it rests. It is an article of my belief that the artist as artist is paramount, that he is greater than the school, the movement, the epoch, and I would transpose the familiar phrase "adventures among masterpieces" into "adventures among artists." Inevitably and in a measure justly you read into a painting of a given period the pressure of external influences. All the time you have to reckon also with the strength of personality and the play of taste. How crushingly this sometimes overrides the sway of convention! There hangs in the museum at Bâle one of the masterpieces of Holbein, his "Dead Christ." It is for me one of the most beautiful things in sixteenth-century painting, a miracle of draftsmanship and modelling. It has tragic pathos, too. But it comes straight from the charnel-house, and you trace in it not so much of religious emotion as you do of the canny, clear-eyed Holbein, the man with a passion for form that had about it something of scientific objectivity. To turn about this phenomenon of personalized artistry, like a many-faceted jewel in one's hand, go from Bâle to Milan and hunt

up Mantegna's "Pieta" in the Brera. Again you behold a dead body, but this time the connoisseur of form who has drawn it is one who has not paused in the charnel-house but has spent a lifetime in the company of antique marbles. This painting, too, has pathos, but it is the personal equation of the artist that in the long run validates it; what we are first and last conscious of is just the idiosyncrasy of Mantegna, wreaked upon a special accent in the treatment of form. The student will be repaid who will pursue this motive as it is exposed in the works of this or that master. Let him pass from Holbein to Mantegna and from Mantegna to that ineffable "Pieta" of Michael Angelo's at St. Peter's. Let him contrast Michael Angelo's handling of form with Signorelli's, or with that characteristic of Rubens. Just as one voice in a choir differs from another in color, so you find the style differing as you go from one passage in the great symphony of form to another. Once in his closing years La Farge walked through the Louvre with a medical friend, who, from time to time, felt his pulse. Afterward the doctor said that, trusting merely to this indicator, he could tell which picture had most affected the artist. It was, he said, the famous "Dead Christ" from Avignon. "And," said La Farge to me, "he was right." The authorship of that painting has been much in debate, but I have no doubt about the source of my friend's emotion. If he owed it to the theme he owed

it even more to the genius of the French Primitive.

Brander Matthews, by the way, once gave me a suggestive anecdote on this matter of the invincible persistence of personality. He and La Farge were talking at the dinner table about the Morellian hypothesis and the painter said:

> Let us suppose the testing of a picture of my own sometime many years hence. The Morelli of the future might look at it narrowly and after a while conclude that the hands and eyes in the picture showed a Japanese conception of form. He would remember that I had kept a workshop, a *bottega*, after the old Italian fashion, and he would have heard that I had had Japanese people with me. So he would say that the picture was a studio piece, the work of a Japanese assistant. Then the Berenson of that day would come along and look it all over very carefully and get much interested in the spirituality of the face. He would say that there was something very soft, very feminine about it, and he would wind up by attributing it to Miss So-and-So, another pupil. — But it would be a La Farge, all the same.

It is by reference to La Farge also and to his experience in the making of his masterpiece, the painting of "The Ascension" I have already mentioned, that I may throw a little further light on the profoundly personal origin of a work of art. He wrote me a long letter about it, describing his methods, how he studied the matter of proportioning his figures to the given space, how he pondered over the naturalistic appearance which he wished to establish in the landscape, and so on. In the effort to make

THE ASCENSION

FROM THE PAINTING BY JOHN LA FARGE, IN THE CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION, NEW YORK CITY

some of his figures look at their ease floating in the air, "I studied what I could," he wrote me, "of the people who are swung in ropes and other arrangements across theatres and circuses." He had certain geometric conditions in his mind which his composition had to meet if it was to make the right pattern in the space awaiting it. The landscape especially troubled him, and on this point there is a passage in his letter which I must quote intact:

> At that moment I was asked to go to Japan by my friend, Henry Adams, and I went there in 1886. I had a vague belief that I might find there certain conditions of line in the mountains which might help me. Of course the Judean Mountains were entirely out of question, all the more that they implied a given place. I kept all this in mind and on one given day I saw before me a space of mountain and cloud and flat land which seemed to me to be what was needed. I gave up my other work and made thereupon a rapid but very careful study, so complete that the big picture is only a part of the amount of work put into the study of that afternoon. There are turns of the tide which allow you at times to do an amount of work incredible in sober moments; as you know, there are very many such cases; I do not understand it myself. When I returned I was still of the same mind. My studies of separate figures were almost ready and all I had to do was to stretch the canvas and begin the work.

Now this artist had one of the richest minds and one of the subtlest souls ever known in art. His "Ascension" is the noblest work of his extraordinary imagination. Its appeal is that of religious painting

in its highest estate. Yet you see from the foregoing out of what human perplexities and expedients it was developed. And if I allude to La Farge's procedure it is not of course to deny him a spiritual inspiration and to contrast his methods with those of the Old Masters, but, on the contrary, to emphasize his solidarity with them. A great religious painting grew under his hands precisely as it grew under the hands of a Titian or even a Leonardo. We talk about the man of action as though he had traits decisively separating him from the artist. The artist is a man of action in that at least while a dreamer he is also a doer, a maker. La Farge, slowly fashioning his picture so that it might become an organic part of an architectural ensemble, sends me back with a heightened sympathy to the great company of his august predecessors. I seem only to apprehend a more vital character in the beauty of their works when I trace behind their unquestioned mysticism endless traits of a more mundane and personal origin.

I love to watch the natural every-day habit of mind belonging to a Ghirlandajo or a Carpaccio, adjusting itself to a realistic gait and achieving its pleasant, friendly narrative effects without any thought of the emotions indispensable to the Primitives. I love to observe Fra Angelico's affection for the flowers and Crivelli's artless sumptuosity. It is delightful to savor the wistfulness of Botticelli, the

paganism of Mantegna, the intellectuality of Raphael, the sheer splendor of Titian, the *terribilità* of Michael Angelo, the dramatic fire in Tintoretto, the inexhaustible bravura of Tiepolo, and so on through the long list of what I would not call phases of religious painting but just the individualized moods of men. Consider the increased intimacy with religious art which we gain through this mode of approach. It is a mistake to be too metaphysical, too recondite, in the study of religious painting. It is a mistake to assume that at some places in the morning of the modern world, in Italy, in Flanders, or elsewhere, art sat at the feet of the church and profited by a mystical laying on of hands. Even on that hypothesis it is to be noted that the religious inspiration depends for its fortunes utterly upon the caprice of fate that illumines one man and not the other. Look at Spain. There is something like religious ecstasy in the paintings of Zurburan and again in those of El Greco, whereas the religious compositions of Velasquez are negligible, though he was, as a painter, the master of them all. Look at the Low Countries. They were the scene of the most pronounced realism, yet the tenderness of the Van Eycks is unsurpassed and Rembrandt was one of the most moving religious painters of all time, as witness alone his "Supper at Emmaus," in the Louvre. It all comes back to the generosity of the gods, who may or may not project into the world a man with the genius of religious

painting in him. A long time ago they dowered the earth with numbers of such masters. They and not their time account for what they did. Let us not forget, either, that most of these men were also great mural painters, great portrait-painters, as much at home with a secular as with a sacred subject — in other words, simply great masters of a craft. This may not be an age of faith, but if a master arose to-morrow, a man of ideas and imagination, emotional and creative, wielding a compelling brush, he could fill the churches with immortal illustrations of the divine story. The case of La Farge's glorious picture proves that.

VII

The Cult of the Drawing

VII

THE CULT OF THE DRAWING

In the "Souvenirs du Dîner Bixio" of the late Jules Claretie there is a passage which rather amusingly illustrates the attitude occasionally held by one eminent man toward another, and incidentally it gives us a clew to the status in French art of one of its most famous figures. The passage reports a colloquy between Meissonier and Gérôme, about Léon Bonnat, which ran as follows:

MEISSONIER. — *Qui va-t-on nommer comme vice-président a l'Institut?*
GÉRÔME. — *Bonnat.*
MEISSONIER. — *À quel propos? C'est donc un peintre?*
GÉRÔME. — *Oui . . . maintenant.*

Thus we see that even an Academician may sometimes be a little acrid toward another Academician. But, as I have indicated, besides what is droll in the anecdote there is a suggestion of Bonnat's character as an artist. He was one of the salient painters of his day, but was he, in the esoteric sense of the term, a painter? He promised to be one when he was a young man in Italy, a *pensionnaire* of the Villa Medicis in the early sixties, the ardent soul painted by

Degas at that time in one of the most interesting of his portraits. Bonnat delineated then the models who hang about the Scala di Spagna in Rome wearing their most picturesque garments, and he made capital pictures out of them. Even then, however, there was working in him a deleterious influence. Born at Bayonne and spending part of his youth just across the border in Spain, he had conceived a great admiration for Ribera. In one of his Italian pictures he invented a scene in which that master sat on the steps of a Roman church drawing the monks issuing from the edifice; and besides commemorating his hero in this way he emulated him in method when he came to paint the portraits that occupied a large part of his career. He went in for a simple but dramatic play of light and shade and put forth a series of extraordinary images. It is resplendent with great names. He portrayed Pasteur and the Duc d'Aumale, Gounod and Pasta, Thiers and Victor Hugo — in short, all the celebrities of an epoch. They live magnificently upon his canvas. You look, for example, at such a portrait of his as that of Léon Cogniet and for a moment you feel that you are looking at a masterpiece. On second thoughts you revise this judgment, for you observe that the portrait is as hard as nails, as rigidly defined as though it were cut out of iron. What was it, in addition to the vitalizing characterization in them, that nevertheless gave them high rank in modern French portraiture? They

were superbly drawn, drawn academically, no doubt, but still with the touch of a master.

Apropos of this matter of Bonnat's draftsmanship I may recite a very curious incident. Gambetta died on December 31, 1882. In its issue for February, 1883, the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* published an article about him as a man of taste by Jules Claretie, and accompanied it by a reproduction of an etching from the head of the statesman drawn the day after his death at Ville d'Avray by Bonnat. It was signed and dated. I tucked it away among my prints and years afterward, in 1898, when Bodley published his book on France, I reprinted the portrait in a review of that work. This fell under the eye of my friend the late Samuel P. Avery, the old art-dealer, connoisseur, and collector. He wrote to me with astonishment, saying that Bonnat himself had aided him to complete his collection of his (Bonnat's) etchings, sending him an impression of any new plate he made, and this one had never turned up. Avery said he would send my reproduction to his agent in Paris with instructions to make inquiry. The report came back stating that Bonnat declared he had never etched the plate, and scrawled across the reproduction were these words: "Bonnat swore by the point of his knife that he never made etching of this in his life." Now what could have caused that amazing repudiation, made under the most sacred of Basque oaths? I call it a repudiation because the documen-

tation of the print is conclusive. Its mere publication in the *Gazette*, one of the sedatest periodicals on earth, would by itself be fairly conclusive, but besides that it bears the familiar signature and Claretie specifically ascribes it to Bonnat in his text. That the artist didn't see it in the magazine at the time is next door to incredible, and that he never protested to the *Gazette* is shown by the fact that when the "Tables Générales" of the magazine were subsequently compiled by Charles de Bus the etching was attributed therein to Bonnat. It will be interesting if some day, in some passage of social or political reminiscence, a ray of light is thrown on this little mystery.

Bonnat triumphed, we have seen, through draftsmanship. The point has a dual significance. He not only drew well himself, but he had a cult for the drawings of others; and if he left one monument to his art in the body of portraiture to which I have referred, he left another to his taste in the Musée Bonnat at Bayonne. That little town in the extreme south of France was good to the artist in his youth, subsidizing his studies, and he never forgot it. As he rose in the world and prospered he collected paintings and drawings, and he gave a prodigious collection of these to the municipality in 1901. I remember that when I visited Bayonne the drawings in the museum made me catch my breath. Nowhere else in the provinces could one encounter quite such riches. It was as though one were in an annex to the Louvre.

Bonnat made memorable gifts to that great national institution — especially one of a priceless sheaf of Rembrandt drawings — but the Musée Bonnat was very close to his heart and it possesses most of his finest gems. These are now being made accessible to a wider public. There is an admirable co-operative organization in Paris, Les Presses Universitaires de France, which exists to supply its members with books at reasonable prices. It also engages in publishing, and it is issuing a series of portfolios under the title of "Les Dessins de la Collection Léon Bonnat." Four times a year subscribers receive a group of from twenty to twenty-five drawings, and publication will go on until the best at Bayonne have been reproduced. This means that in the long run we will have in facsimile some of the greatest drawings of Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michael Angelo; Rembrandt, Holbein, and Dürer; Claude, Poussin, and Watteau. Nor is the collection confined to the ancient masters. Bonnat had a passion for the drawings of Ingres, and, with his fine catholicity, he showed the same ardor in assembling souvenirs of that master's romantic rival, Delacroix. Other moderns are present. The German Menzel, for example, is represented by six beautiful drawings. The first portfolio, which lies before me, well brings out the wide range of the affair. It opens with Guardi and Signorelli. There follows a brilliant sanguine attributed to Maes, and from this we pass to an exquisite Rem-

brandt. Then come Dürer and the elder Holbein, followed unexpectedly by a brilliant drawing in colors from the hand of Sir Thomas Lawrence. The eighteenth-century French School is glitteringly represented by Clodion, Fragonard, Lancret, and Gabriel de Saint-Aubin. Barye, Corot, Delacroix, Géricault, Ingres, and Millet round out the company.

The important thing about these reproductions is that, thanks to the development of modern processes, possession of them is tantamount to possession of the originals, and I note the fact with the more appreciation because it plays into the hands, if I may so express it, of a hobby which I would urge upon every lover of art. Of course there are, I suppose, people quite interested in pictures for whom drawings as such have no great appeal. Well, frankly, I'm sorry for them, and, indeed, I will go so far as to assert that their equipment is sadly incomplete. The world is divided, for me, into two groups, formed respectively of those who care for drawings and those who do not. For those who do care there is nothing so thrilling as a good drawing. I have ridden this hobby all my life and I know. Some old Frenchman — it may have been Mariette — once said that in a drawing you get an artist's idea in its *première éclosion.* You get more than that. You get in its most revealing autographic expression the very breath and pressure of his individuality, you come into the most intimate possible contact with the very essence of

PAULUS HOFHAIMER

FROM THE DRAWING BY ALBRECHT DURER

his genius. Pater and the rest of them have uttered their dithyrambs in celebration of the "Mona Lisa." They seek thereby to draw nearer to the secret of La Gioconda. But if you want to draw nearer to the secret of Leonardo, the secret of that almost unearthly beauty, impalpable and evanescent, which he brought forth from the recesses of his soul, you go to the drawings. There is eloquence enough in his few paintings to carry us far, but in the final interpretation of Leonardo's magic the drawings are so indispensable that without them criticism would be gravely handicapped.

It is so with all the masters. When the Dürer Society issued its first portfolio, in 1898, it specialized necessarily in the prints, but it included a few drawings and multiplied the number of them as it went on with its ten years of devoted reproduction. More and more have facilities for the study of drawings been made the object of a beneficent activity among artistic associations. Long ago, before he dispersed his renowned eighteenth-century collections, M. Doucet took me through them in his house in the rue Spontini. I lingered especially over his drawings by Watteau and the others of that school. Doucet smiled sympathetically and said: "Wait. You shall have them." What he meant, as he proceeded to explain, was that he was about to found his now famous library of art, and with it the Société de Reproductions des Dessins de Maîtres. I joined it, of course,

when it started, in 1909, and remained a member until the concluding portfolio appeared, only the other day. Annually I was enriched by a large group of masterpieces, practically, as I have said before, originals. That Société has done precious things. As a separate venture it reproduced in four large portfolios all the drawings by Pisanello and his school in the Codex Vallardi in the Louvre. It also made some six or seven volumes out of the old Salon catalogues annotated with pencil sketches by Gabriel de Saint-Aubin. Anything more adorable — there is no other word — than those pictorial memoranda of the eighteenth-century draftsman it would be impossible to find, and the facsimiles are so exact that you get the very spirit of his page. I must mention also the fine work done by the late M. Demotte in making a series of facsimiles from the drawings of Degas, a series continued by his son. Degas could have no more eloquent memorial.

The French have been the most brilliant miracle-workers in this matter of facsimile reproduction. The English, however, have been close behind them. Their Vasari Society, created in London to do what Doucet did in Paris, has issued and is still issuing beautiful plates. The Germans have not, in my experience, been so successful. Everybody knows that their book work and color work are exceptional, but I was disappointed in the drawings I got from a society in Frankfort before the war broke out. I

have found better plates in two volumes by Detlev von Hadeln on the drawings of Tintoretto and Titian, but these recent books, good as they are, might be better. They certainly don't challenge the supremacy of the French. While I am speaking of that I ought to mention another source of valuable reproductions for the amateur to whom the cost of original drawings is prohibitive. I mean the sale catalogue as it is issued in Paris. Some remarkable French collections of drawings have passed under the hammer, Doucet's, the Muhlbacher collection, and that of the Goncourts. The drawings of the great Heseltine collection have also been reproduced to a certain extent; and, in fact, more instances crowd upon my memory than I can enumerate here. Some of my best prizes have come from the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*. It is not at all an unexciting sensation to buy a bundle of back numbers of the *Gazette* at auction, to buy it "unsight unseen," and then to sift out of it a handful of superb drawings, perhaps a new Leonardo or a Dürer of the first water. The browsing among books is almost illimitable since photography came to the aid of illustration. There are monumental folios like Berenson's classic work on the drawings of the Florentine masters and there are popular inexpensive collections like the one which the Scribners imported from England some years ago, each thin volume in which was given to excellent full-page plates from the drawings of a single master. Decidedly the collector who gives his

mind to it may go on indefinitely adding to his portfolios. In one way and another the reproductions of drawings in the last twenty or thirty years have been run up into the thousands.

There is more in this circumstance than its reference to the collector's purse. He has one great advantage besides that of gathering unto himself treasures available only to the millionaire before the mechanical processes involved in the matter were perfected. He is absolutely unrestricted in his choice. The luckiest of millionaires is helpless before the fact that a given drawing is lodged forever in the British Museum or in the Louvre, in the Uffizi or in the Albertina. On the other hand, the collector who could not dream of possessing an original Leonardo, may little by little assemble facsimiles of virtually all the Leonardos. And I cannot too often reiterate the tremendous meaning of that word "facsimile." A photograph of a painting is one thing; a facsimile of a drawing is quite another, often giving you not only the drawing but the color and texture of the paper and even the stains thereon. In other words, the judicious collector having the modest status to which I allude, may make himself the master of the whole cosmos of historic draftsmanship. He will ride his hobby, of course, in accordance with his own taste. He may specialize in this or that school. He may concentrate on Botticelli, say, or on Rubens, and be utterly indifferent to Degas. But on one point, I

think, all amateurs of this subject will agree. The drawing for which they care will be not only the drawing of a true artist, but it will be a chip from a workshop, a study, a preliminary step toward something else, a natural gesture which we surprise looking over the artist's shoulder. There are exceptions, to be sure. Ingres made some of his finest drawings as finished portraits. I might cite other illustrations from types old and modern, but I need not go into this phase of the subject. The drawing I have particularly in mind is just the drawing that I might describe as the informal fragment of personality, the drawing in which the painter or sculptor feels his way toward the creation of a work of art and thinks aloud, as it were, unfettered by those conditions which confront him when he is functioning in full dress.

If this character is important to the drawing there is also much emphasis to be placed upon the distinctive quality of the artist, his flair for draftsmanship, his way of giving to line a special power and enchantment. Where the drawings of some painters are full of the subtlest elements, disclosing beauties that frequently evaporate when they work with the brush, the drawings of others are negligible, even though those others can paint like masters. Sargent, for example, is more of a technical virtuoso on canvas than John La Farge ever dreamed of being, but his drawings, as drawings, haven't a tithe of the felicity

belonging to those of La Farge. It is strange, by the way, that the drawings of the modern painter seldom have the virtue residing in the drawings of the past. Occasionally draftsmen turn up. In England they have Charles Shannon, Augustus John, and William Orpen. Here we have a consummate draftsman like Arthur B. Davies, who is as unique in black-and-white as in color. But men like these are excessively rare. And the most singular circumstance is that the draftsmen who professionalize the subject, the artists who draw strictly for publication, make scarcely any contribution at all to our subject. A master like Forain is only the exception that proves the rule. Great illustrators like Abbey and Howard Pyle may draw with unqualified authority, but there is a crucial distinction between their draftsmanship and the kind of draftsmanship that I have been talking about. It is the great paradox of this cult for the drawing that the connoisseurs who have followed it from the Renaissance down have almost invariably sought the drawing which was not so much a masterpiece in itself as a stroke on the way to one. The typical drawing of superlative interest and beauty is a kind of sublime by-product of art.

VIII

Venice as a Painting-Ground

VIII

VENICE AS A PAINTING-GROUND

The most paintable city on earth rests, as a matter of fact, upon the sea. I refer of course to Venice. There are other places in the world that rival it in what is commonly called picturesqueness, but they haven't won the painter as Venice has won him. Some pedantic statistician might here arise and point out that Holland has been having its portrait painted for centuries. I would grant him his figures but I would still go on stubbornly to assert that for the artist the Venetian glamour has been incomparable. And now the artist must look to the defense of his favorite painting-ground, for it is grievously threatened by so-called modern progress. Pompeo Molmenti, the Carpaccio man, who has all his life been a champion of Venetian integrity, has assembled in a book, "I Nemici di Venezia," the papers in which he has repeatedly returned to the castigation of the city's foes. The latter are as varied in the nature of their attacks as they are numerically strong. One insidious enemy is the man with the purse who, against the law, secretly contrives to detach from Venice some of its most characteristic art treasures. Then

there are the more candid souls who would erect tasteless new buildings cheek by jowl with the historic monuments. But, indeed, the schemes of the promoters are endless.

Once she did hold the gorgeous East in fee — and now she is the sport of the speculator! In *The Living Age* one day I found some passages quoted from an indignant Italian journal on some of the "senseless projects conceived by Venetians and non-Venetians." I used to wince when I floated about the lagoons in a gondola or a sandola in the early days of the steamboats and had to take the wash of those impertinent little craft. But they were as nothing compared to the sort of thing proposed by the vandals mentioned in the *Revista d'Italia:*

A few of them would like to improve part of the lagoon shore so as to enable people to raise cabbages and potatoes upon it. Others have more varied and also more persistent ideas. They want to join Venice to the mainland by means of a grand bridge for pedestrians and vehicles. In a near future it might be possible thus to leave a villa in Venice and go directly by motor-car or tramway to the gardens of Bottenighi. As it is plain enough that the tramways, automobiles, and carriages could not stop short and accumulate at the town limit, a way will be naturally found to give them easy access to the streets of the interior, and that is all that will be needed to change the aspect of the city and the general run of its life. . . .

An invention *à la* Jules Verne! A street which will reach over and across canals, marshes, and islands is going to unite Venetia with the station of Mestre. It will be

an iron construction, a huge road of steel beginning at the station of Mestre, crossing the lagoon, flanking Venice along the new Fondamenta; then at the farther extremity of the latter it will divide into two branches, of which the left one, passing close to the celebrated island of San Francesco del deserto (*beata solitudo!*) and over more bridges and embankments, will reach Burano; the right branch will fly over the port of Lido, run along the shore, cross the canal of the port of Malamocco, go all the way along the shore of Pellestino and end at Chioggia.

The worst thing about this campaign to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs — for surely the tide of money-laden tourists will slacken as the city loses its charm — is that it has been gathering momentum for such a long time, it has been so deadly in its persistence. I have seen something of the gradual deterioration myself. When I first used to go down to the Lido for my daily dip the whole place was simplicity itself, and after coming out of the sea it was only a few steps away from the pavilions to stretches of what seemed like isolated serenity. My friend Eugene Benson would be painting a picture only a few hundred yards off. I would lie in the sand at his side among the primroses scattered about, and I would be aware of nothing save sea and sky. In successive summers after that I saw the Lido grow more and more like Coney Island, and the last time I was there it had become so raucous and shoddy a resort that I fled in disgust and never went back. Imagine how a host of Venice-lovers will feel if the city itself

suffers a kindred transformation! In two ways the disaster may be thwarted. In the first place, propaganda may drive it into the heads of the Venetians that their so-called "improvements" can only divert from the lagoons that army of travellers which now means so much to their prosperity. Generations still to come will be repelled from visiting the city which their forefathers frequented as a shrine. Secondly, if "local pride" is non-existent in Venice, the Italian Government might conceivably do some thinking for the city fathers, and protect them from their own stupid obduracy by declaring Venice a national monument, to be tampered with only under heavy penalties. Signor Mussolini is, they say, a very busy man, occasionally in trouble even with his own Fascisti, but those all over the world who care for Venice will hope that in some happy moment he may come to the rescue of their dream city.

I call it a dream city advisedly, for I firmly believe that there is no other city in the world which to the sensitive traveller is more an affair of poetized visions, of romantic moods. The unimaginative can find no welcome on the lagoons. Have we not all met the man who remembered nothing in particular about Venice save that there were bad smells on some of its canals and that its mosquitoes had a lethal bite? I know all about the smells and I have fought the mosquitoes, but I know, nevertheless, that Venice is Beauty Incarnate. So she has been to a glorious

company of painters, the immortal spirits for whose feelings I have suffered whenever I have encountered signs of the encroachment of ugliness and vulgarity upon her domain. One could weep with Veronese, enthroning Venice upon the world itself in the ducal palace. He gave her attributes of imperial grace and strength. He placed the Lion of St. Mark's at her feet between figures of Justice and Peace. He saw her, in a word, reigning in fadeless splendor. Poor Paolo! How could he anticipate the era of the tin Lizzie?

The old painters knew well the unique beauty of their town and paid jealous tribute to its genius and its monuments. When Gentile Bellini delineated a great religious procession in the piazza he gave the upper half of his canvas to a magnificent portrait of the Cathedral. The city gave him backgrounds for more than one picture, and repeatedly you find masters like Carpaccio and Mansueti drawing for their compositions upon the scenes they saw about them. There is, however, an interesting distinction to be observed where the attitude of the older Venetian masters toward their beloved city is concerned. They did not regard her precisely in the way of the Impressionists. Their pride in her was rooted in a strong sense of her material pomp and power, of her political ascendancy, and it was strongly tinctured by religious emotion. Hence the personification of Venice as a queenly figure, hence the portrayal of

even St. Mark's itself as a background rather than for its own sake. Somehow the old Venetian master could not think of Venice as a mere spectacle. He was forever glutting his eyes upon pageants, but behind the color and the movement he saw the might of state or church, and he commemorated ideas as much as appearances. It is a curious circumstance that Venice in its more mundane and social aspect, as an arrangement of form and color appealing sensuously to the eye, practically shorn of all symbolism, did not really come into its own until the eighteenth century.

It is then that one recognizes the stirring of a new impulse, the impulse to paint the Venetian scene out of sheer delight in its corporeal loveliness. In Tiepolo the earlier conception of the city as a mine of backgrounds still lingers, and the pillared schemes in his mural decorations revive the sumptuous note of Veronese with a new and flashing accent. But Tiepolo kindled now and then to the pure elegance of the Venetian social picture; and among all the paintings of this period I know of none more humanly engaging than his fascinating "Consilium in Arena," in the museum at Udine, a spacious interior with figures recalling the very essence of eighteenth-century Venetian life. Life, customs, and manners, the Venetian as well as his background, may be said to fill the Venetian art of that time. Longhi painted the fashionable types that he knew, the lady of Venice and her cava-

liere, and he did not disdain either to study the apothecary or the fortune-teller. Step from his scenes into those of Guardi. Go with the latter to a concert in the house of some noble, to a ball in the theatre of San Benedetto, to a masquerade at the Ridotto, to a festival on the Grand Canal, or to an ordinary gathering in the Piazza of St. Mark's. Wherever you follow him you behold indoor or outdoor Venice, clothed in brocade or in marble and animated by figures which, whether in gleaming satins or dark velvet cloaks, are the very images of Venetian piquancy and pictorial charm. There are times when Canaletto will strike you as the more solid painter of the two, as, especially, the stronger draftsman. But Guardi is the great triumphant exemplar in his age of that Impressionism which I have mentioned as neglected by his ancestors. His lagoon pictures sparkle with a living light. There are drawings of his which show that he went about sketch-book in hand, and swiftly jotted down fugitive effects. His paintings clearly profited by this habit. They have extraordinary freshness and spontaneity.

Chronologically the next arresting figure amongst the painters of Venice is Turner. Sir Walter Armstrong, his definitive biographer, was unable to ferret out the exact date of the artist's first contact with the Venetian scene, but he has traced sketches of the city which seem earlier than 1832, and that is regarded as roughly the significant year. A point be-

yond cavil is that the English master had a peculiar flair for the subject. What Armstrong says about it is so concisely illuminating that I may cite him here:

> His almost unbroken stream of "Venices" began to flow on to the Academy walls in 1833. Between that year and 1846, he only twice — in 1838 and 1839 — missed having at least one in the exhibition. . . . According to my view of his personality, Turner had been waiting all his life for Venice. It gave him exactly what he wanted. It afforded an opportunity to combine the particular view of the world's envelope which appealed to himself, with a skeleton, a supporting structure, which was at once strange, picturesque, and entirely human. It was therefore not surprising that he fastened upon it as he did, and that between 1833 and his death he sent no fewer than twenty-five pictures of Venice to the annual exhibition.

There is a useful clew in this fragment to the whole drift of what I may call Turner's Venetian hypothesis: "The particular view of the world's envelope which appealed to him." It is the artist with such a view who has always made the most of Venice. After all, a "dream city" is hardly the place for a crass realist. More than of any other city in Europe it may be said of Venice that everything that an artist finds there depends upon what he brings there. Turner brought a fine constructive vision, the power to build up upon the Venetian "skeleton" a prodigiously romantic fabric of atmosphere and color. It is not exactly a ghostly city that he paints, but one in which

richly decorated façades and the towers and domes lifted above them take on an intangible beauty. They are bathed in a golden luminosity, in a light that never was on sea or land. In the foreground gondolas, sailboats, or ceremonial craft float in a strange immobility. You look on not at life but at a kind of tableau, and though the place is unmistakably Venice the key might be that of some legendary Babylon. It is all magnificently unreal, of dubious value as a record but inestimable as an interpretation.

Turner's worthiest successors have been Americans, two of whom have linked their names with the city with something of his creative magic, equalling him in the originality of their work. When Armstrong said that Turner had been waiting all his life for Venice he expressed an idea that may be applied to Whistler. Our American painter never found himself in any environment more favorable to the exercise of his genius than was the Venetian. There he made many of the most brilliant of his etchings. There were produced some of the most exquisite of his Nocturnes. Otto Bacher, in his delightful book, "With Whistler in Venice," tells how his friend once joined him in his gondola where Bacher was at work on a plate of the Ponte del Pistor. Said the older man: "This is a good subject. When you find one like this you should not do it, but come and tell Whistler." There was nothing of Whistlerian arrogance in that. He was simply

expressing what every one who knows his work will admit, that Venice was his, that he was born to interpret her secret with a special inspiration, etching her beauty by day and painting it by night with a touch so personal and so new that his portraits of Venice stand forever apart. The Nocturnes are extraordinarily tender and beautiful. No one ever saw Venice looking just as she looks in these paintings, but that is only another way of saying that no one was ever inspired by a Grecian urn as Keats was inspired by one. If Whistler was sent into the world for any purpose that no one else could fulfil it was to make a Venetian Nocturne.

The only contemporary of his approaching him in this singularity and exquisiteness of achievement was William Gedney Bunce, whose characteristic design was composed of a long, low horizon line separating a tremulous lagoon from a vibrating sky, with a campanile or two lifted into the air and a group of sailboats shrewdly placed to right or left in the foreground. Out of these few materials he fashioned the most amazing opalescent effects. Like Whistler's, they are very new and personal, but Bunce differs from Whistler and from Turner in being a little more realistic than either of them. You can't quite see Bunces for yourself in Venice, unless you have been born with something of his genius, but he is not so mysterious as the other men are. John Sargent, of course, is never mysterious, and you enter a totally

VENICE

FROM THE PAINTING BY JOHN SARGENT

different world when you enter his Venice. But don't imagine for a moment that it is a negligible world. On the contrary, Sargent's Venice is one of the most interesting that I know. I remember a Venetian street scene of his, another picture of an interior with bead-stringers at their work, and a strong study of San Giovanni Evangelista. Then there are the numberless water-colors in which architecture, gondolas, and all manner of motives are drawn with uncanny precision. Sargent did an immense mass of work in Venice and all of it is superbly brilliant, the vivid record of a Venice that every one can see and touch. Every one can see it, but only Sargent could paint it with that supreme virtuosity of his. So he, too, though in so different a way, affirmed like Whistler certain inalienable rights in Venetian territory. He knew the city all his life as an intimate of the Curtises, and when, on his election to the Royal Academy, he brought forward, as is customary, a picture for the Diploma Gallery there, he made it one of his masterpieces, a study of the Curtis family grouped in one of the great rooms of the Palazzo Barbaro, their Venetian home.

F. Hopkinson Smith did good work in Venice. He did it with a marked economy of means, so that for some time his work looked a little thin. A. B. Frost once caricatured it uproariously, appending to his funny drawing lines at which no one laughed more heartily than Smith himself:

You can bet your bottom dollar
We're onto the Venice caper,
A little paint, a little work,
And lots of empty paper.

But "Hop" got over that and as the years went on brought back from his summers in Venice more and more substantial and delightful impressions. They were realistic. All the American artists who have painted Venice this side of Whistler and Bunce have been realists, mixing next to no poetic emotion with their colors. The only exception I can think of is the late Robert Blum, who painted Venice with a subtle delicacy. He was always a sterling artist and on the lagoons he, too, dreamed dreams.

What of the men on the spot? When I saw the earlier international exhibitions at Venice, many years ago, it was, paradoxically, the Spaniards rather than the Italians who seemed to be most active on the scene. I used to foregather with them for dinner at a dingy old *trattoria*, tucked away somewhere not far from the piazza. It was a jolly crew. Martin Rico would be there in a pirate's mustachio, the inky blackness of which I surmised came out of a dye bottle. He was a portentous being, clothed in shepherd's plaid, altogether one of the most noticeable figures I ever encountered. It surprised me when I ran across him, painting away in some corner of Venice, that nobody paid any attention to him. Probably they had got used to him as he had been at it

for a long lifetime. And Villegas dined with us every night, bearded, a little bald, dapper, and with an indescribable air about him of solvency and authority. I remember him also in his handsome villa just outside one of the gates of Rome, the place crowded with paintings and antiquities. He was enormously successful. American millionaires visiting Rome bought his pictures. Prosperity got him, perhaps, a little expectant of consideration. One summer he sent to the international a huge "Marriage of a Dogaressa." It contained an abundance of a peculiarly flagrant red, and I noticed at dinner that one of the subjects nobody talked about was the "Marriage of a Dogaressa." Then came some inspections by the *cognoscenti* of the European press and all that red paint was freely damned. Villegas forthwith shook the dust of Venice from his feet — if there is any dust in those watery thoroughfares — and went off to Spain. All Italy came under his displeasure. He abandoned his Roman villa and stuck to his native land. For some years before he died he was Director of the Prado at Madrid.

Rico, Villegas, Gallegos, and others of their company whose names I have forgotten painted the Venetian glitter and not much else. There used to be a time when an American collection was incomplete without a "Venice" by Martin Rico. His pictures still figure in the auction-room occasionally, but I wonder where they go. Those clever Spaniards were

not quite clever enough to carry on the torch lit by Fortuny. He, by the way, would have painted a marvellous Venice if he had ever given his mind to it. But amongst the old sketch-books I have pored over in old days at Madame Fortuny's Venetian palazzo I recollect no souvenirs of the lagoons. Very recently two or three young Italians have arisen who, without doing anything really memorable, are still doing something to restore the tradition of Venice as a place productive of art. Perhaps the most talented of them is Favai. Italico Brass is another fairly auspicious type. Emma Ciardi is a Venetian artist of really distinguished capacity, but she paints chiefly the villas on the mainland, peopling them with figures in eighteenth-century costume. It would be interesting to see her at work on the lagoons.

If she did good things there, as I believe she would, it would be because she possessed that quality to which I have alluded as inseparable from the true artist in this field, the personal quality, the singular quality, the something original and, if ever so faintly, creative. That is indispensable to the painter anywhere, but it is necessary nowhere more conclusively than in Venice. If the city is, as I said at the beginning, the most paintable on earth, it is also the most exacting.

IX

Silhouettes of Old Masters

I. Van Dyck's "Dædalus and Icarus"
II. Velasquez's "Dying Seneca"
III. Two Portraits by Reynolds and Gainsborough

IX

SILHOUETTES OF OLD MASTERS

I

VAN DYCK'S "DÆDALUS AND ICARUS"

SINCE New York has become the world's clearing-house for the great works of the old masters that emerge slowly into the market, there is, from time to time, in the galleries an episode to be marked with a white stone. A *chef d'œuvre* is placed momentarily on exhibition. Then it is purchased by some collector and passes, forthwith, from the public view. I cannot forbear preserving in this place my memories of one or two such apparitions, brief records of delightful passages in critical experience. One such memory I retain of a picture at the Duveen Gallery, an extraordinary Van Dyck out of Earl Spencer's collection. This "Dædalus and Icarus" is an amazing work, illustrating the painter in a vein unfamiliar in the United States. It is through his portraiture that Van Dyck is chiefly known among our collectors, and there he is held in honor for certain specific traits which the practice of the portrait painter, especially in his period, was exactly calculated to bring out. I

refer more particularly to the courtly elegance inseparable from the world in which he was called to move. Van Dyck's innate refinement made him the predestined commemorator of lordly types. It is interesting to reflect on his significance as an exemplar of that natural instinct which persists through all the vicissitudes of training and experience and stamps an artist's work as with the inevitability of a thumb-print. Consider the difference between Van Dyck and his master, Rubens. The latter undoubtedly conquered for himself the status of a great gentleman, rose to ambassadorial rank, foregathered with kings and princes, and altogether was so circumstanced as to interpret their characteristics, as it were, from within. But that full-bodied Flemish habit of his which was in his blood would not down, and when he let himself go on some royal theme, as in the brilliant Medici canvases at the Louvre, his brilliance is that of the surface of a pageant. I recall his gorgeous state portrait of the Earl of Arundel. The earl and his wife are very tangibly portrayed, but somehow the ensemble is that of a factitious tableau, packed with *étoffage*. It was not so with Van Dyck. He was, by gift of the gods, free of the language of courts, and when he painted figures of incomparable polish and grace those elements of charm flowed with easy magic through his brush. It is no wonder that his portraits are cherished or that they have caused his name to be associated with one transcendent virtue,

DAEDALUS AND ICARUS

FROM THE PAINTING BY VAN DYCK

that of high-bred delicacy. But he had other strings to his bow.

That glorious strength in Rubens which so often took the bit between its teeth and ran away with him, landing him in earthiness, was present in Van Dyck in rich measure, but held in check by a finer taste. You have a manifestation of it in the "Dædalus and Icarus." It is tempting to speculate on the mood in which he painted it. For my own part I can imagine him saying to himself: "I think I'll paint a nude. Just to show them." Being what he was, he was bound to give penetrating thought to the subject, and this picture is impressive just as an embodiment of a legend. The myth is vividly realized. Youthful pride and daring are superbly put before us, and made the more effective through their contrast with admonitory age. What he has to say, too, Van Dyck says with all the power of scholarly design. The poise of the principal figure, the exact relation to it of Dædalus in the background, the placing of the wings and the arrangement of the drapery — all these things are consummately handled. But what makes the glory of this picture is the painting of the body of Icarus. A photographic reproduction shows something of the perfection with which the beautiful young form is drawn, the faultless construction of the torso and the arms, the fine drawing about the face, head, and hair. But the marvel of the flesh painting must be seen at first hand to be appreciated. It is

nothing short of a miracle of pearly, luminous tone, the skin palpitating over the ribs and muscles in a glow as forceful as it is tender.

It is not direct painting in the sense that Manet, for example, would have given to the term; but, on the other hand, this nude is singularly free from signs of any kneading or fumbling. The impasto is not too thick and the tone has great fineness, great purity. It has, of course, great unity also, yet within that unity there are countless modulations of the utmost exquisiteness, nuances that Velasquez might have envied. Memory goes back to that master's "Rokeby Venus." It is a lovely thing in its dusky brilliance, but in that particular instance the Spanish painter seems not only a little pallid beside Van Dyck, but a little less subtle. Yes, he showed them. In a burst of technical maestria the suave painter of knights and ladies in their satins and laces put forth all his strength upon the problem involved in the treatment of the nude, and produced a glittering masterpiece. It is a great Van Dyck, one of the greatest in the world.

II

VELASQUEZ'S "DYING SENECA"

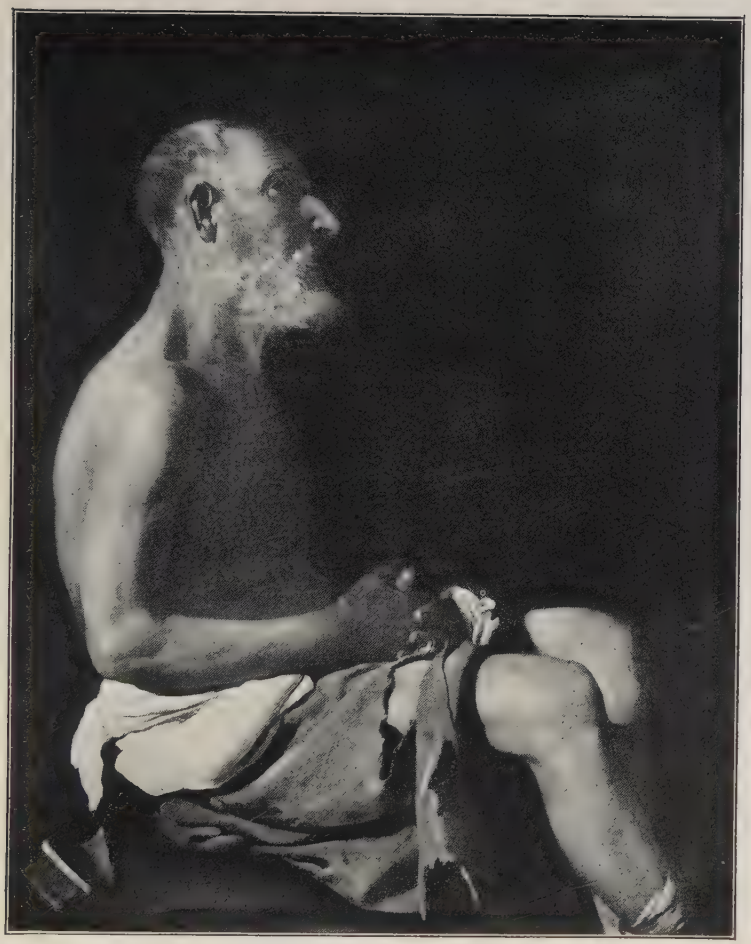
Two early paintings by Velasquez have recently come to this country. One of them, the "St. John in the Wilderness," was bought by a private collector

in Chicago and has been lent by him to the Art Institute in that city. The other, a "Dying Seneca," was not long ago at the Ehrich Gallery. It is one of the most interesting souvenirs of the Spanish master I have ever seen, illustrating his art in its formative period when he was a student under Pacheco, in Seville. That sterling craftsman taught him, above all things, "the true way to imitate nature." Beruete, in his precious monograph, cites from Pacheco's "Art of Painting," a passage which richly illuminates the early art of Velasquez. Speaking of the *bodegones*, with their conscientious realism, the artist says: "It is in this belief that my son-in-law, Diego Velasquez de Silva, was brought up from childhood. He sketched a little peasant child who was a model for him in various poses and attitudes, sometimes weeping, sometimes laughing, without attempting to avoid any of the difficulties. And from this boy and others he made numerous studies on blue paper in charcoal heightened with white, which enabled him to arrive at truthfulness in his portraits." You can trace the splendor of his greatest works to that first devoted discipline.

Realistic truth is the foundation and corner-stone of the *bodegones*. Perhaps the most characteristic expressions of it are those which you find in the two famous pictures at Apsley House, the "Young Men at a Meal" and "The Water-Carrier of Seville." They disclose his habit of taking his material where

he found it, in the streets and taverns, amongst peasant types. He was never endowed with the creative imagination that seeks an outlet in terms of high invention. Even when he tackled religious themes he kept his feet upon the solid earth, as witness the fine early "Supper at Emmaus" in the Altman collection. This is a dignified interpretation of the theme, but it remains essentially a page from seventeenth-century Sevillan life, the devotional spirit of the painting being subordinate to its frank realism. You get in it the force of a thing seen rather than the mystery of a scene imagined. Its simplicity is purer, a little weightier than that of Tiepolo, say, treating the same subject. He avoids the slightly theatrical turn of the Venetian. Compared with Rembrandt's "Supper at Emmaus," on the other hand, the Spanish picture is as hollow as a drum. Velasquez knew nothing of the tragic pathos which the Dutch master had at his finger-tips. For Velasquez there was nothing on earth so important as just "the true way to imitate nature."

His preoccupation with that standard comes out superbly in the "Dying Seneca." It is a well-nigh flawless "academy," the coolly considered, painstaking work of a student set by Pacheco to study the nude for the good of his artistic soul. Every detail is drawn and modelled with the most searching care. The fact is reproduced as in a mirror. One can imagine Pacheco's sigh of satisfaction as he looked



THE DYING SENECA

FROM THE PAINTING BY VELASQUEZ

over the shoulder of this miraculously precocious pupil, and the words of discreetly judicious approval he spoke. No wonder he gave him his daughter for a bride! He must have felt that here was a young man of genius. For that is the interesting thing about the "Dying Seneca" — its proclamation of a new and phenomenally gifted painter. The theme and the idiom speak of Caravaggio and Ribera. But in the grain of the execution one perceives an individual touch that is unique, and with it that flair for beauty which does so much to give the Spaniard a place apart. Look to the beauty of the drawing, observe the tact with which the drapery is arranged, and note especially the charm of the whites and grays. Remark also the magical strokes which bring out the character of the model's beard. They play over the canvas with astounding ease and certainty. A born painter, you say, if ever there was one.

A born technician, with an instinct for the portrayal of life. The title of this canvas is, in a sense, irrelevant. Pacheco was doubtless responsible for it. He, as Beruete tells us, was "a great lover of Latin literature," and I can hear him talking to Velasquez about Seneca and giving him the inscription to place upon the canvas. But they had only to step out of doors to find the model and we may be sure that when Velasquez got him posed he thought of nothing save of his painting. It is in its realism, pure and simple, that the "Dying Seneca" foreshadows such

later pictures as "The Forge of Vulcan," and, in fact, the whole long story of the master's career. Yet its true lesson lies in the circumstance that realism, pure and simple, is effective only in proportion to the admixture with it of certain other qualities. Without the technical rectitude of Velasquez the truth in the "Dying Seneca" would lose half its vitality. And the other half would go if it were not for his unsleeping feeling for beauty.

III

TWO PORTRAITS BY REYNOLDS AND GAINSBOROUGH

Besides the Van Dyck I have described in this chapter the Duveens got from Earl Spencer two other masterpieces, constituting an imposing dramatization of an historic moment in eighteenth-century English portraiture. Both are of the same subject — that Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, of whom Walpole said that she "effaced all without being a beauty." She was eighteen when Sir Joshua painted her in the full-length brought to this country, he being then in his prime. Eight years later she posed for Gainsborough, when he, too, like his great rival, was at the height of his powers. Turning from one of the tall canvases to the other, the mind reverts for a moment to the situation in the artistic London of that day, to the two leaders supporting each in his

different way the identical tradition. "We are all going to heaven," said Gainsborough on his deathbed, "and Van Dyck is of the company." The solidarity of the school is one of the outstanding phenomena of history. "They" were all united in carrying on the dignity, the elegance, the courtly grace which had come down to them from the famous Fleming. But the first lesson one draws from these portraits is the lesson of individuality. Genius overrides the very formula on which it rests. Reynolds and Gainsborough, both allied to the academic principle, engage in a rivalry determined by the most personal of inspirations, and each transcends the academy.

A remarkable felicity attends upon the portraits, taken together. How fortunate was this duchess, this "irresistible queen," the friend of Sheridan and Fox, the embodiment of charm! Reynolds painted her in a moment of animation, a figure of arrested movement, poised at the head of some steps. When it came Gainsborough's turn he studied her in meditative repose, a little older, a little more mature and in a graver mood. Merely as human documents the portraits have a deep interest, merely as interpretations of a woman who enchanted her contemporaries. If legend is to be believed, her painters flattered her, but it would seem that they did no more than heighten what they found in her features. Perhaps she was not as beautiful as they made her. But the witchery

they gave her is, by all accounts, authentic. The memoirs teem with tributes to her personality. She had an illuminating mentality. In her girlhood she listened with unaffected interest to the sayings of Doctor Johnson, and from that august company she could pass to spirited combat with the fashionable wits of her world. She must have been a gracious, lambent being, and so the two masters painted her.

But it is with their technical triumphs that I am first concerned; and here, again, one is tempted to the use of superlatives. Looking at the Reynolds I thought instinctively of "The Tragic Muse" and, frankly, I must confess to finding the "Georgiana" more extraordinary than the "Mrs. Siddons." The latter is undoubtedly Sir Joshua's masterpiece in austerely monumental portraiture. It comes back to the memory as a portentous achievement in design, the figure, the throne, and all the subordinate details being welded together in superb unity. But, perhaps by virtue of this very perfection of balance, of scholarly *ordonnance*, the "Mrs. Siddons" remains a little cold. In it Reynolds is utterly the academician, magnificent, and at the same time a little chillingly formal. In the "Georgiana" he is the consummate brushman, glorying in his mastery over his instruments, moved to enthusiasm by his theme, and producing in a burst of energy a canvas in which we feel that his soul must have rejoiced as he laid down the brush. For

sheer splendor it is the most thrilling thing of his I have ever seen.

The lady's dress is white save where, at the shoulders and waist, and in the veil flung across the outstretched arm, there are powerful accents of brownish gold. Crowning the grayish headdress there are feathers of vivid pink and white. There are autumnal glints in the rich foliage filling part of the background, and notes of strong blue appear in the sky beyond. There is great force in the color scheme, but it is kept wonderfully in hand, a flawless harmony, rich and mellow, save where the feathers lift the key. The tone of the dress is merely miraculous, one of those studies of white in which an ordinarily lifeless hue is made fairly to sing. In sensuous beauty, in the magic of pigment made eloquent, Sir Joshua surely never did anything in his life to beat the passages of gold. They are as discreet as they are resonant, the quintessence of painter's painting. He matches the *tour de force* of this ornamentation and of those incomparably vivacious feathers with the *maestria* that you feel in the drapery, with the supple polish that marks the drawing of the arms, the hands, and everything about the face and hair, and with a marvellous play of light over the whole canvas. More often than not Reynolds impresses you by the cool, measured nature of his art, the cerebral origin of his design, and the similarly calculated movement of every phase of his technic. In this portrait he

seems to paint, rather, with a kind of passion. I have alluded to formula. There is something of it in the "Georgiana." The well-worn eighteenth-century convention is there, the lovely attitude, the parklike background, the adjustment of the whole affair to a definitely fixed social hypothesis. But the wine of inspiration bursts the vessel that would contain it. Reynolds gets, as it were, outside of himself, the academician yielding to the painter. The result is a glittering, breath-taking masterpiece, a portrait vibrating with the emotion that is attuned to beauty. It is a case of the grand style made intimate and searching, of the Olympian Sir Joshua forgetting his wonted calm in the ardor of creative painting.

After the overpowering success of his "Georgiana" one feels a certain drop on turning to Gainsborough's, and the experience is odd, for, as a rule, it is the other way around. Gainsborough's natural habit was far more that of the virtuoso than was Sir Joshua's. Even with this "Georgiana" of his before us we know that Sir Joshua could never have painted "The Blue Boy" or the "Perdita Robinson." Neither, for that matter, could he have done the portrait confronting his "Georgiana" in this study, yet we have to reckon with that drop. For once Gainsborough seems, at any rate, less powerful. He has not that moving splendor to which I have alluded. But I note it only in passing. Make the transition, forget the difference in question, and think only of that individuality

which I mentioned at the outset. There Gainsborough is potent enough, in all conscience. It tells not so much in design, where he follows convention with marked docility, as in the solid construction of the figure and in the painting of the dress. That, too, is white, ever so faintly flushed. The girdle and the scarf the Duchess holds are of the tint of an aquamarine, hesitating between blue and green. It is an ineffably delicate arrangement of tone, one that would have fascinated Whistler. And every nuance in it is developed with that necromancy of brushwork that has done more than anything else to make Gainsborough immortal. "Feathery" is the canonical word for it, and the only one adequately connoting the artist's lightness, his deft translation of insensate pigment into something incredibly exquisite and mobile. The painting has the tremulous beauty of an opal and, withal, an unmistakable force, even plangency. The dress had to be strongly painted, in fact, to withstand the competition of the heavy mass of red drapery above, half revealing the stately gray pillars. The landscape in this portrait is comparatively unimportant, but it includes an effective sky.

There is a curious contrast to be remarked in the study of these two canvases. They were painted by contemporaries, who, as I have said, adhered to the same broad tradition and were in many ways committed to the same practices. Doubtless, for example, they patronized the same color man. But their

methods differed. Sir Joshua painted with a full brush, kept his surfaces fairly solid, and was historically careful of his medium. Gainsborough followed a more liquid mode, used a thinner medium, and, by the same token, was apparently less learned in the matter than his rival, though he, too, was solicitous as to what went onto his palette. In the upshot each tells a different story. Reynolds's surface has the purer integrity, has better withstood the passage of time. The essential tones, I gather, preserve their values with equal tenacity. The carnations in both portraits are singularly true and gleaming. But Reynolds fabricates the solider, more steadfast lacquer. Less subtle by half in the modulation of tone he yet, in this instance, retains a tenderer bloom. It raises an absorbing technical problem.

X

Raeburn

X

RAEBURN

RAEBURN occupies a place apart in the firmament of British art. In London the leaders carry on a clearly defined tradition. Developing the courtly mode of Van Dyck in the atmosphere of the Georgian period, they give it a decisively academic turn. Even Gainsborough, with that flying "feathery" brush of his, subscribes to much the same theory of *ordonnance* that is most resplendently illustrated in Reynolds. The school has a certain solidarity, based on respect for discipline. The men of genius in it affirm marked individuality, but all have a kindred accent. Raeburn ploughed his own furrow. There seems to have been some virtue in the very fact that he grew up scarcely touched by the pressure of that sort of corporate influence, if I may so designate it, that bore upon his English confrères.

He was the son of a Scots miller who was prosperous enough to see that he had some schooling, but this did not last long, and he was still a lad when he was apprenticed to one Gilliland, a jeweller and goldsmith. By him he was by and by introduced to a fashionable portrait painter, David Martin, who

gave him the run of his studio, allowed him to copy some of his studies, and presumably benefited him through some practical instruction, though on this point the various biographers are not very illuminating. "Bob" Stevenson, one of the best of his commentators, surmises that at Martin's he must have "picked up enough knowledge to go on with." He "went on" with judgment and rapidity. In 1778, when he was twenty-two, he married a widow with some fortune, and it is noted that "he improved his wife's property by intelligent management." Thenceforth he was much at his ease in Edinburgh. Stevenson characterizes him, with the painter's portrait of himself to aid him in the vignette, as "a large, bold Scot, full of humor and intelligence, fit to swallow a lot of work and yet keep an appetite for social pleasure, for golf, for archery, for fishing, for expeditions with friends, and for the somewhat heady after-dinner conversation which pleased the northern man."

Six years of married life found him a happy and sufficiently successful man, visited by compunctions as to his artistic equipment, and he went for two years in Rome where the dilettanti Gavin Hamilton and James Byres gave him guidance and advice. It is recorded that when he returned to Scotland he came straight through, with no obvious thought of Paris or the Low Countries. It may have been from economic motives, but it is possible also that he was merely incurious. By this time he had beaten out a

mode of his own, and his chief thought seems to have been to get back to his own land and exploit it. Scotland was ripe for his appearance upon the scene. It abounded in types and notabilities. They liked the handsome, self-confident, accomplished painter, and he became, in his turn, one of the salient figures of the Northern Athens. England took note of his prowess, and in due course he was elected to the Royal Academy. He was honored by other artistic bodies, and in 1822, when George IV visited Edinburgh, he knighted the painter and made him "His Majesty's Limner for Scotland." He was a friend of Scott, whose portrait he painted, and was engaged upon an excursion with him, Miss Edgeworth, and others only a few weeks before he died, in 1823.

He exhibited frequently at the Royal Academy, and, as I have said, became a member; but though he was in it, he was never precisely of it. The explanation is readily enough accessible in the tall canvas dedicated to the Drummond children, one of them mounted upon a pony. It reveals at once, in contrast to similar designs of English origin, a certain naturalistic directness, moving persistently away from the formality characteristic of the more academic painters. Byres is somewhere credited with having done Raeburn a crucial service in urging him always to "keep his eye on the object." It constitutes his leading merit. Over the masterpieces of the English school there is flung a thin veil of a certain mun-

dane elegance, one of that school's finest qualities. Raeburn had little to do with it. A realistic approach was instinctive with him. He could be ineffably graceful when he chose, as witness the exquisite "Mrs. Vere of Stonebyres," in the collection of the late Senator Clark. But this very portrait, in its animation, its spontaneity, shows how much more vigorous than courtly Raeburn was wont to be. No painter of his time was defter than he was in the fixing of a pose. His red-coated sitters, like "Captain David Birrell" and "General Sir William Maxwell," are unmistakably martial, on parade. But he gets his pictorial point, so to say, essentially from the individual he portrays, not through accessories or background, through that *ordonnance* to which I have referred as more typical of the English craftsmen.

There are two or three celebrated full-lengths by Raeburn which denote his ability to get the last ounce of picturesqueness out of costume and attitude. They are the portraits of "Dr. Nathaniel Spens," "Sir John Sinclair," and "The Macnab." The national dress counts heavily in all of them. But in these, too, he is direct, completely free from that immobility which dogs the merely academic portrait, and it is the personality of his sitter that dominates the composition. In the bulk of his portraits he is far nearer to Manet than to Reynolds. Stevenson has rescued from the archives some interesting data on his method:

Mrs. Vere of Stonebyres

FROM THE PAINTING BY RAEBURN

He seldom kept a sitter more than an hour and a half or two hours. He never gave more than four or five sittings to a head or bust portrait. He did not draw in his subject first with the chalk point, but directly with the brush on the blank canvas. Forehead, chin and mouth were his first touches. He placed the easel behind the sitter and went away to look at the picture and poser together. A fold of drapery often cost him more trouble than the build or expression of a head. He never used a mahlstick.

The critic adds that these were the habits of the French painters *à premier coup*, and points out, justly, that while it does not leave each touch final it means that "the work was searched out and finished in one direct painting." To this habit, which more than anything else stamps Raeburn as an essentially modern artist, the commentator must always return. The enchantment of his portraits lies in their fresh, crisp handling, in brushwork that states the fact with a positively exhilarating precision. Does it state that fact with charm? Yes, where the portraits of women are concerned. The lovely "Mrs. Campbell," in the Byers collection at Pittsburgh; the portrait that is almost French in its elegance, of "Margaretta Henrietta, Lady Hepburn"; the dainty "Miss Eleanor Urquhart," are above all things charming. His portraits of men are above all things simple and forceful. Here again you find Raeburn gaining a little by comparison with his English rivals. He escapes the somewhat excessive suavity which occa-

sionally betrayed them. He bears down on character rather than on worldly demeanor. His handsome Scots are strong as well as handsome men.

Looking to the mint and cummin of technic, on the other hand, Raeburn has what might not unfairly be called the defects of his qualities. His draftsmanship, so swift, so sure, so cannily adroit, is a little thin and hard. His line is not exactly wiry, but sometimes it almost extorts the epithet, and is then undoubtedly wanting in distinction. Then, too, though he models a head with superb aplomb and defines the structure of a face with all the clean-cut simplicity of that ever-present directness of his, you cannot help wishing — especially when you are in the company of numerous portraits by him — that he would not manipulate the light and shade with quite such incurable sophistication. It brings an incongruous element of something very like theatricalness into his fundamentally sincere art, his sole approach to the pit of formula. In other words, Raeburn did not wholly avoid the dangers of facility. It brings him near to mannerism in some of his heads and it leaves him sometimes, in his handling of textures, a little papery. There are moments in which this powerful Scot falls into the trap that engulfed Lawrence and is merely "slick."

But they are only moments. When he is in the vein, and he was generally in the vein, he is as wholesomely forthright as a Scot could be, as honest as

he is direct, and, withal, a painter with some notable reaches of tenderness in him, for all his granitelike force and veracity. It would be hard to beat, for the sweetness of adolescence, the Drummond picture to which I have already alluded, and it is beautifully matched, in the matter of feeling, by the famous "John Tait and His Grandson," a study of old age and childhood. That gives, indeed, the final measure of Raeburn's ability as a portrait painter, disclosing not only his sterling technic, but his grasp upon character, his emotional capability and his art in carrying design very far yet well this side of formal convention. If an English master had painted it you would perhaps call it "monumental." The term is a shade too imposing for Raeburn. He is too intimately human for it.

XI

The Eighteenth Century

I. Hubert Robert

II. A Portrait by David

III. Prud'hon

XI

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

I

HUBERT ROBERT

THE French school of the eighteenth century was of sophistication all compact. It was a growth of the studio, brought to perfection for the drawing-room and the boudoir. Never was an art more sympathetically social than the art of this period. It is at once the mirror of French manners and their monument. It reproduces with exactitude the color and movement of a life in which human relations were codified to an extreme degree, and its all-pervasive law was one essentially urban. The wholesome airs of the countryside seem to have been excluded from this fabric as by general consent. But genius dominates the surroundings from which it draws the breath of life. In the paintings and drawings of Watteau you see how his instinct for nature made him superior to mere artifice. Chardin, delineating kitchen-maids and other humble domestic figures, developed a style as robust as his themes and rose masterfully above the insincerity of his time. From the influence illustrated by these men there developed in the eigh-

teenth century a feeling for nature counterbalancing the hothouse atmosphere that everywhere controlled. Artists who would not have known what to do with a ploughed field, such as Millet was later to make beautiful, were at home in a stately park. They recognized the value of a tree, at least as a decorative value. Hence, they arrived at the formation of something like a landscape tradition. They exploited it in a subordinate capacity. Their landscape was never painted for its own sake, but only as a background. Nevertheless, they made it fascinating. It was this tradition that produced Hubert Robert.

He was born in 1733, a light, gay personality, not in the least a man of genius, but indubitably a man of talent. He was altogether in harmony with his period. When he died in 1808 and they buried him in the cemetery at Auteuil, the inscription upon his tomb commemorated him as an Academician formally enregistered as such, not only in his native France, but in the then St. Petersburg, where the Russian aristocracy had long followed a cult for his works. Stress has been laid upon his cheerfulness, which persisted even under the imprisonment which he suffered during the Terror. He is described as a bold athlete in his youth. At Rome he risked his life promenading the cornice of the dome of St. Peter's. He did this on a wager of a few sheets of drawing-paper. Vigee-Lebrun, who painted his portrait when he was a young man, represents a full-blooded, energetic being, who, with the

temperament that we know he possessed, ought to have become something like a romanticist. He became, instead, an archælogue. He never could throw off, he probably never wanted to throw off, the habit of the Academy. At the same time, there was at the bottom of his academic predilection a certain realistic strain. In the foreground of his "Staircase and Foyer of the Villa Medici," a purely architectural subject, as formal in design as a work by Pannini or Piranesi, a washerwoman has hung up her linen. The incident is characteristic of Robert, of his taste for everyday accents upon his monumental schemes. He did not always draw his figures himself. Boucher, Fragonard, and others drew them for him. But he wanted them there. It is the mark of his archæological world that nature is always creeping in.

There have been curious fluctuations in the repute of Hubert Robert. He was enormously prosperous while he lived. Allusion has been made to his Russian vogue. Catherine II invited him, in 1782, and again in 1791, to come to St. Petersburg. He no longer had, however, the gusto for travel which had sustained him in his youthful Italian wanderings. He would not go north himself, but was content to paint quantities of canvases for his admirers there. M. Louis Reau estimated in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, some time ago, that there were easily a hundred examples of Hubert Robert in the public and private collections of Russia. At home he always had abundant

support. In the official world he held high rank. On the tombstone aforementioned he is honored as "Conseillier de l'Academie Royale." In 1778 he was a member of the committee appointed to supervise the alterations in the Louvre required by the establishment there of the King's pictures. It was not until 1895 that M. Gabillot published his monograph on the painter. This was followed in 1910 by M. de Nolhac's admirable volume, and a few years later M. Tristan Leclerc celebrated him and the landscapists of his time in a contribution to a series of popular handbooks. To-day Hubert Robert is once more on the crest of the wave. His works fetch high prices in the auction-room in Paris. Collectors are finding him worth while. Why should there ever have been any interruption to appreciation of his art?

It is partly explained by the nature of that art itself, as it is unconsciously criticised by Vigée Lebrun, who held him in high esteem. She notes in her "Souvenirs" that it was fashionable to have one's salon painted by Hubert Robert. Fashion is a perilous taskmistress, leading particularly to the cultivation of that facile method which is one of the most specious of all crutches. Vigée Lebrun again records the dubious proficiency of her friend. "*Il peignait un tableau*," she says, "*aussi vite qu'il ecrivait une lettre.*" Facility like that implies scores of "pot boilers," and Hubert Robert painted them, not simply by the score, but, I might even say, by the hundred.

It is significant, too, that he has been bracketed for popularity with Greuze, which is tantamount to saying that he had in him a vein of rather too saccharine sentiment. Even now the commentator occasionally patronizes him. M. Louis Hourticq says that he "trifled with the noble ruins of Rome and Provence." Well, perhaps he did. But, like divers other men, he trifled to good purpose. There is a kind of artist in the history of landscape painting notable for a scenic handling of nature and for a treatment of architectural motives that is perhaps to be characterized as trifling. Claude had the grand style. Poussin had it. But Wilson, the Englishman, is a good example of the old classical hypothesis made a little less than majestic. Guardi, too, made the ruins in some of his pictures charming rather than impressive. This was the function of Hubert Robert not to impress, but to charm.

The eighteenth-century French painter who made landscapes more than a background in his pictures was Joseph Vernet. He revived the architectural tradition of Claude, but his classicism did not keep him from loving nature for itself; and if he was capable of building an academic composition in the heroic manner, he was also capable of painting a recognizable portrait of a place. Hubert Robert, who formed himself to some extent upon Vernet, inclined less to portraiture in landscape and more to a theatrical ideal. In an easel picture, therefore, which exists in

isolation, he has less weight than his master. But when he has a purely decorative aim he more than rivals Vernet; he achieves, if anything, a finer rôle. There are some delightful easel pictures of his. They are serene, limpid impressions, their picturesqueness carried just so far, their naturalism held in check by a polished elegance. Taken as a group apart, they would be sufficient to justify Hubert Robert as a minor figure of distinction in his school. But the decorative panels almost give him major rank in that school.

His paintings are meant to enter into the integrity of a wall. They do this. As I have said, he was not a man of genius, but his talent was consummate. He "trifled" with his ancient ruins in the sense that he relieved them of all unduly weighty and forbidding effects. He painted them with a kind of suavity. They are masses of hoary stone, yet he contrives, without doing violence to their antique dignity, to make pillar and frieze, crumbling staircase or half-wrecked cornice, no more overpowering than the same things are when they are simulated in the opera-house. These are, indeed, bewitchingly operatic scenes, these scenes of Hubert Robert's. A classical ruin of his, a Renaissance palazzo still intact, as in "A Fête at the Villa Medici," is relieved by trees which hint not of the forest but of the garden. Even when he paints a wilder subject as a pendant to the villa picture just mentioned, he makes it, "The Tor-

rent," an altogether gracious impression of a shattered temple lifted above a rocky gorge. He is never tragic. From the blithe morning or noonday light in which he generally bathes the first canvas in a pair he passes to a more subdued key without indulging in anything graver than a sort of mild, sunset revery. His characteristic mood is cheerful. Long before the impressionists he was interested in problems of illumination. He had no science with which to solve them, but he had what was almost as good, an exquisite taste. He had, too, the instinctive ability of a born craftsman.

His craftsmanship tells primarily in the building up of his compositions. He knows what to leave out and how to bring what is left into a happy unity. See him in the two panels dedicated to the baths founded by Count Vigier on the Seine. He puts the prosaic elements of his subject into a most beguiling perspective. The *enveloppe* is as graceful as the substance of the work is not. But look even more attentively at a couple of decorations, like "The Fountain of the Temple of Vesta" and "The Rest in the Park." There his subjects meet him half way, they are classical, but nature has her chance, and the painter can put forth without handicap the peculiar strength that is his.

He can make his ancient ruin a light, romantic fabric. He can make his trees like the accessories in some comedy of the period, all grace and slender

beauty. Over everything he can throw the glamor of a bright, cool, luminous sky. The sky in a good Hubert Robert comes near to making the painting a masterpiece, it is so deep and airy, so blandly spacious, so full of clear, fine color. I say a "good" Hubert Robert. The pot-boilers tell a different story. At its best his work is a source of sheer delight, making known, in an ideal way, the best qualities of a deeply interesting type whose traits need to be better understood in the United States. It is full of suggestion for the student of decorative painting. It shows how nature and art may be fused together, how landscape may be introduced into formal schemes without pedantry, without sacrifice of the beauty belonging to greensward and trees. The net result is, as I am bound to repeat, a shade theatrical, but it is theatricality refined to a point of loveliness. Think of it in close association with the social world of eighteenth-century France and one cannot help making much of the glittering artifice which was a second nature to Hubert Robert, as it was to all the painters of that epoch save such portents as Chardin and Watteau. Think of it more abstractly, as just a mode of decorating a wall in any period, and you forget the glitter, you recognize only the urbanity of Hubert Robert's tradition, its eternal freshness and fitness, its easy adaptation to the atmosphere of beautiful houses, its kinship to the art of living. To many a modern artist, I dare say, panels like Hubert

Robert's must appear to belong to a bygone era, frozen within the confines of an outmoded system of design and technic. But I am sorry for the decorative painter who could not see the advantage of taking a leaf from Hubert Robert's book, who could not learn something about blending landscape and architecture from the Frenchman's brilliant example.

II

A PORTRAIT BY DAVID

Just once in so often there comes into view a masterpiece of painting that is absolutely *hors concours*, a work so perfect in all its relations that one looks upon it with a sigh of contentment. Such a work I saw at the Wildenstein Gallery one winter in a great portrait by Jacques Louis David of the eighteenth-century chemist, Lavoisier, and his wife. It is a huge canvas, perhaps eight feet tall. In its superb frame of contemporary origin it brought back all the splendor of the old régime, that period of courtly brilliance in which a serene sense of balance, of order, was tempered by an innate feeling for the sensuous beauty of life. The portrait has a rich significance, from both the historical and the artistic point of view.

In the matter of history it gets its status from Lavoisier as well as from David. The former was a remarkable personality, a born chemist, who in his

hours deviated into finance and thereby invited ultimate disaster. Born in Paris in 1743, of humble parents, he nevertheless received a thorough education and developed an extraordinary genius for chemistry. Along that path he might have proceeded in safety through a long career. But an evil fate gave him specious advancement, making him while he was still in his twenties one of those *fermiers-generaux* upon whom the bitterest hatred of the Revolution was to fall. Though he had been out of that office for some years when the storm broke, his alliance with governmental error was remembered against him, and in 1794, while he was still in his prime, the Tribunal sent him to the guillotine. His life had been very happy. In Marie-Anne-Perrette Paulze, the daughter of another farmer-general, he had married an ideal wife, with talents for the very laboratory work upon which he was engaged. When David painted them together he painted comrades in chemical research as well as in all the private relations of life.

He painted them in 1788, when he was himself forty, back in Paris from his experience as a winner of the Prix de Rome, a full Academician, classically minded, a portent of everything that ought to spell a reactionary and arid type of art. He was a court painter, and the very soul of tradition. But this portrait, like certain others by David, constitutes a warning to the student to beware of the lure that lies in labels. To call a thing "academic" in our own day

LAVOISIER AND HIS WIFE

FROM THE PAINTING BY DAVID

is often foolishly to misrepresent it. What of the power of genius? That will utterly destroy the meaning of a mere label. David had a broad streak of genius in him. He painted, beyond question, some of the deadest canvases that exist in French museums, vast tableaux of antique life which are as remote from our comprehension as the myths they commemorate. But he who would get at the truth about David, eschewing conventional disparagement, would do well to consider his portraits, especially those which date from the period just prior to the Revolution and from the time of conflict itself.

Despite his academic affiliations David was a human being if ever there was one. When the Revolution came he broke with his past, morally at least. He who had labored with all the good will in the world for Louis XVI threw himself so ardently into the company of royalty's foes that when the critical moment arrived he could cast his vote for the death of the King. He was intimate enough with Robespierre to suffer imprisonment on the collapse of that leader. He was to breathe again, in due course, and sympathetically enough, the atmosphere that envelops a throne. If he had had Louis XVI for a master he could adapt himself complaisantly to the service of Napoleon. It isn't, perhaps, a pretty record. But it is, we repeat, very human, and you feel this in his art. On one calamitous day, looking out of the window of his friend Jullien's studio, he saw the

tumbril go by — Marie Antoinette upon the bench within it, her hands corded behind her back, her face disfigured by suffering and tears, all her majesty in ruins. So he drew her, in a few spare lines, and the sketch remains one of the most poignant souvenirs we have of that tragic time. It was characteristic of David. With the same unflinching directness he drew the dead Marat and afterward painted the terrible portrait that is in the Brussels Museum. It was his true genius working in him, the genius for seeing and recording.

There are divers thrilling examples of this realistic eloquence of his. One of the most memorable of them is the powerful profile of Le Pelletier de Saint-Fargeau, a strange, original head, drawn with the swift and almost brutal veracity of a Hals. To talk of the Academy in the presence of such vitality is to winnow the wind. It would be as essentially inapposite in the presence of the portrait of Lavoisier and his wife. What, after all, is the test of a work of art, academic or of some other sort? It is that it should live, that beneath the technic there should throb an immortal animation. That is unmistakable in the portrait of the Lavoisiers. Is the design at all formal? Remember that in that particular it registers the very walk and demeanor of the time. Here is eighteenth-century propriety, grace, elegance, mirrored in perfect realism. Then consult the attitudes in detail. They are arranged with unfaltering respect to the laws of com-

position. The four hands, for example, are woven into what I can only describe as a pondered felicity. But the effect of the whole is the effect of life.

There is a curious fusion in this painting of an intimate sentiment with the dignity of the grand style. All that we know of this pair is suggested in their grouping, we feel the charm of their personalities, accented by the professional interest they had in common, and at the same time what is personal in the portrait is lifted to a higher power by the force of David's art. I have alluded to the symmetrical beauty of the design. I turn next to the magnificent drawing, observable not alone in the hands, for example, where it tells most obviously, but in the dress of Mme. Lavoisier and in the form of her husband. Then I go on to the color, to the beautiful whites in the dress aforesaid, to the black costume of M. Lavoisier, to the glowing rose of the heavy table-covering, and, finally, to the discreet grays in the background. The still life gives an emotion apart, it is so exquisitely and yet so unobtrusively handled, and all through the canvas you come upon marvellous little passages of pure painting, in the lace across the lady's bosom, in the quill feathers, in the easel thrust into the shadows and in other details. It all displays that quality which Ingres so loved, "the rectitude of art," workmanship supremely mastered, distinction, beauty. And with all this there goes convincing truth.

It is, above all, the proud vitality of the thing that most moves us. This portrait gives an overwhelming answer to those who ignorantly decry tradition. It is the calibre of the individual artist that settles the business. Let him be a master, let him truly know his trade and respect it, and in tradition he uses not a formula but a language, a living language whose potentialities are limitless. Neither Rembrandt nor Velasquez has given us a more veracious evocation than this portrait of the Lavoisiers. In certain ways they are obviously as different from David as it is possible for them to be. His technic is removed as far from theirs as pole is from pole. But in this one matter of truth he is their peer, and by truth I mean not the reproduction of fact as so much still life, but the transference of it upon canvas so that it remains genuinely sentient and sympathetic. And David, in his "academic" way, works another magic which ranks the portrait as indubitably a great work of art. He imparts to his painting the cachet of style. There, as in his design and his draftsmanship, he triumphantly expresses the genius of the old French school. Thinking of that, I do not forget the claptrap of "La Distribution des Aigles," or the dreary theatricality of, say, the "Antiochus et Stratonice" — only I put those pieces in their place. I come away from the portrait of the Lavoisiers thinking simply of David at his best.

III

PRUD'HON

Though Prud'hon lived in an era that thought a good deal of the grand style, he was himself not so much for grandeur as for charm. That is Prud'hon's special gift, the envelopment of his themes in a gracious, subtly endearing air. Touch was everything with him. He was musical, lyrical, the master of an essentially tender and fragile quality. He may be studied in portraiture, in the treatment of the nude, and in the rôle of draftsman pure and simple. Whatever he does is eloquent of the same romantic loveliness, the same charm. Fully to appreciate Prud'hon you must have some sense of his background. You must see him in that period which marks the transition from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth, from the old régime to the Napoleonic. The decorative spirit of the court of Louis XVI has died out. The classical severity of David has come in. The moment is one for the antique virtues. Prud'hon has them, in a measure. He has a positively pagan delight in form. He has the academician's feeling for stately composition. But there is a poetic instinct struggling about in him. He would be a classicist only he happens to have been born a romanticist. So he filters the formulas of David through his temperament, looks at the nude not as at a marble in a museum, but through rose-colored spectacles, which

leave it with the animation of life heightened and made somehow more gracious. He adds to the classical tradition something akin to "the Correggiosity of Correggio," that melting tenderness which, when it escapes sentimentality, is one of the most entrancing things in the world.

It invests with a new grace the linear purity and dignity of his portraits. It softens, makes exquisitely sensuous, the forms in a wonderful little grisaille of his, "Venus, l'Hymen et l'Amour." It flings a kind of bloom upon his bewitching drawing, the "Young Woman and Cupids." Prud'hon's portraits are fine things, but it is in his drawings that we come nearest to his central enchantment. It is the elegance of the earlier eighteenth century come back, poetized, endued with more of the fresh loveliness of spring, more of the glamour of romance. He knew nothing of that rich breadth which Watteau took over from Rubens. Where he was allied to the painter of "The Departure for the Island of Love" was in his passion for the beauty that is fleeting, diaphanous, fairylike. The drawing I have just cited is one of his masterpieces, one in which his fusion of classical motive with romantic fervor and style is consummately achieved. He is a comparatively minor figure in the history of French art, but he is one of the most seductive.

XII

Gavarni

XII

GAVARNI

It happened once in Paris, long ago, that M. Guillaume-Sulpice Chevalier, then a young artist at the outset of his career, sold a design to the publisher Susse. The latter noticed that it was unsigned and remarked that for the benefit of the public this omission should be corrected. The artist pondered for a moment and then, taking up the pen, made a decision which was to have far-reaching consequences. Perhaps he thought that his name was too long. Perhaps a flood of sentiment rushed through him as there just then rose to his memory the lovely valley of Gavarnie, where he had spent a happy period within the glamour of the Pyrenees. At all events, upon this occasion he signed himself "Gavarni" and thus gave immortal syllables to the trumpet of Fame.

It is a name around which cluster some of the most beguiling and suggestive associations in the history of French art, one which has engaged the ardent activity of one pen after another. None was ever more eloquent than that of Sainte-Beuve, who as far back as 1863 consecrated three of his luminous "Lundis" to Gavarni, then within only three years of his death.

Not too long after that event the Goncourts wrote their invaluable book, invaluable for the intimate lore which it contains and for the superb etching which Flameng made as frontispiece from Gavarni's celebrated portrait of himself, "L'Homme à la Cigarette." Beraldi gave a particularly skilful little memoir to Gavarni in his well-known catalogue published in the eighties. Only the other day there appeared in Paris under the imprint of Floury the first volume of a work in which M. Paul-André Lemoisne obviously proposes to go most exhaustively into the subject. It is study of his pages that has specifically set me to thinking about Gavarni, but the man and the period have always seemed to me to repay reflection.

The period is one of those which, in their very contradictions, have a particular attraction for the analyst. "Victorian," for example, has become a byword, yet if it connotes much that was commonplace, dull, and even ugly, the apotheosis of mediocrity, it also designates a period marked by a positively Elizabethan expansion of the British genius. So it is in France, during that time of transition which stretches from the break-up of the Ancien Régime to the establishment of the Third Republic. Gavarni was born in 1804 and died in 1866. Between those dates French art is constantly in travail, having to reckon with untoward influences. One great classical type survives in Ingres to fertilize one so modern as that which we have in Degas, but in general there blows from the old years

of David and the Napoleonic interval a chilling wind inimical in the last degree to the rise of the Romanticists and the naturalistic painters of Barbizon. It was in the sixties and for some time later that the Impressionists had to fight for whatever ground they won. The Second Empire remains a pinchbeck affair in the eyes of most commentators, and the artist could hardly be expected to come to its defense in view of the fact that its favorite portrait-painter was the sentimental, insipid Winterhalter. Yet even while that saccharine journeyman prevailed, there were great spirits on earth sojourning, and they were not without opportunity and stimulus. It is a droll paradox that it was Napoleon III himself who authorized the organization of the Salon des Refusés in the same building that housed the official Salon in 1863. Men like Manet and Whistler, after all, had their chance, and yet I balk a little at the word "chance." Genius has never yet been fortuitously kept down. It will affirm itself, no matter what its surroundings. Sometimes, too, it will ally itself with those surroundings, extracting from them its natural sustenance. Nor is it subdued to the stuff in which it works. On the contrary, it forces the material at its hand to its own purposes. This was the way of Gavarni. You do not think of his era as one precisely favorable in France to the development of art, but it was favorable to him, and he was a great artist.

It was favorable to him because he was born to illus-

trate its most picturesque traits, and then, too, circumstances were kind to him. He came into the world along with a great company of brilliant men. Think for a moment of the writers of those days, with most of whom he was destined to be thrown. It was the period of Dumas, of Balzac, of Victor Hugo, of Gautier. The artists of ability are past counting. It is enough to note here that if you would see him in a group you would recognize Daumier on his right and Constantin Guys on his left. There was "atmosphere" enough and to be spared for the evolution of his talent in the work and companionship of his contemporaries. He was born in Paris, and save for certain absences of his youth he breathed for most of his life the airs of the capital. There is nothing more evocative of the spirit of Gavarni than the introduction to that *Journal des Gens du Monde* which he started in 1833 with the collaboration of a veritable squadron of celebrities. The essence of this *Journal Artiste-Fashionable* is untranslatable, and so I must give as they were printed the words proclaiming its début:

Voyez, Messieurs! Voyez, Mesdames! Voici Paris la Capitale! Paris la belle! Paris la ville aux gens d'esprit! Paris la ville aux bonnes manières! Paris la ville où l'on sait marcher, où l'on sait saluer, où l'on sait sourire, où l'on sait faillir, où l'on sait tout faire comme il faut! Voici Paris! Voyez! Voyez, gens de la province; voyez, gens d'outremer! Voyez, Allemands; voyez, Russiens; voyez, gens de tous lieux; gens qui voulez apprendre à vous coiffer, à vous parfumer, à vous presenter; gens qui voulez bien dire,

qui voulez bien rire, qui voulez bien voir, qui voulez bien vivre: voici Paris!

Les voix de Paris!
Les yeux de Paris!
Les mots de Paris!
Les airs de Paris!
Les bals de Paris!
Les chapeaux de Paris!
Les rubans de Paris!
Les odeurs de Paris!
Les adresses de Paris!
Les moqueries de Paris!

Tous les riens de Paris Paris, Paris, voici Paris!

To qualify as the pictorial laureate, so to say, of this Paris he had instinct rather than training. In his youth he oscillated briefly between architecture and science, showing the while a strong mathematical bent. All his life long this last persisted in him, so that he would often work out a problem on the margin of a drawing. It is not unreasonable to infer that this taste of his had something to do with his development as a draftsman, partially accounting for his exactitude in matters of form and perspective and for the crisp purity of his line. He was precocious with the pencil and, in fact, was still in his twenties when he was making drawings for publication. I will not pretend to trace all the steps in his career as a pictorial satirist. Beraldi thinks that he made perhaps eight thousand drawings, water-colors, lithographs, and so on. His designs were published in periodicals and al-

bums. A fairly full catalogue was made by Mahérault and Bocher in 1873, but doubtless M. Lemoisne will frame an even more conclusive list by the time he gets through. I am not concerned with its minutiæ here. It is rather of the broad cosmos it represents that I am thinking, Gavarni's cosmos of life and movement. It was his cosmos in a very deep spiritual sense. Sainte-Beuve says of him that "he was observation itself," but in another passage he expresses his belief that Gavarni did not need to have a subject actually under his eyes in order justly to entitle it "After Nature." Memory and imagination, and that gift which we call genius, reinforced physical observation. *Il a son monde en lui.* With that seeing eye of his there went a philosophical habit of mind, commenting, differentiating, enriching, and so making it possible for him to give instant form to the visions of revery. The inexhaustible spectacle which was Paris passed, as it were, like so much ore through his mind to be poured forth in the pure minted gold of his designs. It came forth pure gold because, for one thing — a point which might ordinarily seem irrelevant — Gavarni was very much of a gentleman. Sainte-Beuve, as I have just noted, says that *il est l'observation même.* Beraldi, adopting a similar locution, says that *il fut la distinction même,* adding that he gave distinction to everything which passed under his crayon or his pen. All his commentators unite in the conclusion that, no matter from what slum or backwater he drew his subject,

Le Cambrioleur

FROM THE DRAWING BY GAVARNI

he did not know how to be common or vulgar. From his early manhood he was interested in clothes. He used to design theatrical costumes for Mlle. Georges, Carlotta Grisi, Déjazet, and other great ladies of the stage, he improved upon the fantasies of the carnival in his time, and he gave his attention to the dress of the man of the world, which he wore himself with an air at once *gaillard* and exquisitely conventional. Humann, the tailor whose name is preserved, like the proverbial fly in amber, in the serene prose of Sainte-Beuve, respectfully took off his hat to Gavarni as to a man with an incomparable flair for *un habit noir*.

We see him, then, contemplating Paris, the Gavarni cosmos, very much from within, living its life as an initiate, understanding the tone and sentiment of its dinners and its dances, swinging with a natural grace into its extraordinarily graceful movement — above all, participating in its movement. There has never been anything to beat the brilliant rhythm of Paris in Gavarni's time. Life swept on to a light, waltzlike measure. The very dress of the period was expressive of its hectic pace. Crinoline has gone down the wind as, among other things, cumbrous and thereby awkward, but for the artist there was an element as of quicksilver in its flowing lines. How Gavarni could draw the animated elegance, if I may so describe it, of a Parisienne's toilet! He caught the rustle of frou-frou as hardly any other pictorial connoisseur has ever caught it. He has his rivals in this field, I know.

Eugene Lami was an artist with a singularly delicate touch, and when he painted a courtly pageant, like that enveloping the marriage of the Duc d'Orléans, or delineated the notables in the *foyer de la danse* at the opera, he placed upon his picture exactly the right accent of mundane distinction. Guys was another mirror of the social world in which its forms and color flash and gleam with extraordinary charm. Yet Lami always strikes me as uninspired and Guys as a little thin and mannered beside the supreme vitality and beauty of Gavarni. Gavarni has an *élan* to which neither of the others can quite lay claim; he is infinitely more various and he has in far greater measure the attribute of style. His secret lies, I suppose, in the fact that he knew so magnificently how to draw.

Any final estimate of his genius must reckon, no doubt, with his substance as much as with his form. The legend beneath the drawing is of equal importance with the latter. Sainte-Beuve was profoundly impressed by the cynical wit and wisdom of these legends. He loved to observe the evolution of a Gavarni who was a kind of Fragonard into a Gavarni who was a kind of La Bruyère. A great deal of the entertainment to be got out of the lithographs lies in the concisely eloquent words accompanying them. They are as concise as they are biting. In one of the numerous designs given to his ragged philosopher, Vireloque, Gavarni has him contemplating a fallen drunkard, and the legend says simply: *Sa Majesté*

le Roi des Animaux. Under the portrait of a pompous oracle is placed this edifying dialogue:

> "*L'homme est le chef-d'œuvre de la création.*
> *Et qui a dit ça?*
> *L'homme.*

He moralizes life as he goes along and if he does so with something of the cynic's mordant tone, with a lucidity that is sometimes a little bleak, he nevertheless preserves in the main that precious *élan* to which I have alluded. Even in his pathos there is grace, and here I come back to his line. I have glanced at his philosophical function, at the moralist, the satirist, because, as I say, this side of him cannot be ignored. It is easy to understand how the legends appealed to a mind like that of Sainte-Beuve. It could not have been otherwise. In a country like France, given to the play of ideas, Gavarni could not have been Gavarni without a deep fund of gnomic intelligence. But neither could he have been Gavarni without his linear power, and I must confess that to that, as an art critic, I turn with immeasurable gusto. I have often been struck, in thinking of this period, by the characteristic good fortune of France in her two princes of black and white. If you cannot think of the period without Gavarni neither can you think of it without Daumier. They offer you the two sides of the one medal. Each supplies what the other lacks. For Daumier the crushing philippic; for Ga-

varni the airy, lightly stinging *mot.* And as it was with their satirical texture so it was with their technical equipment. The puissant Daumier is a modern Michael Angelo in his massive treatment of form. The delicately effective Gavarni has beside him a Raphaelesque polish and suavity. He is withal, like Daumier, one of the most original spirits in the history of art. No other draftsman in the host of clever illustrators and caricaturists adorning his time had anything like his richness of individuality. That fecundity at which I have glanced in citing Beraldi's figure of eight thousand designs is significant of the type of creative artist that Gavarni was. He operated like a force of nature, spontaneously, abundantly, and with a sort of sublime certainty. His touch has about it a wonderful ease and precision. Consider too how free he is from surplusage, with what perfect balance and economy he puts his compositions together. I would not press this matter of his felicity in design too far. He is in no wise Raphaelesque as a weaver of linear patterns. On the other hand, nothing could be more discreet or more pointedly right than his placing of a figure. There he has that virtue for which Matthew Arnold had such appreciation in his word "inevitability." He realizes a scene, a group, or an isolated figure, always in what seem to be both the terms of life and the terms of pictorial unity.

He led a long, successful, and, in the main, unad-

venturous life. One rather surprising episode arrests his biographers. Once he went to London, to spend a few weeks, and remained there for several years. He had introductions to smooth his way into the presence of Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort. but for some occult reason he scamped his courtly opportunities and devoted himself to observation of the ordinary walks of life. He had his misanthropic moods, and latterly the philosopher in him knew some sad moments. The death of a son bore heavily upon his spirit and he suffered a material vexation which sorely exasperated him. Gavarni was an impassioned lover of flowers and trees, and he was happy in cultivating his Auteuil garden. But the Haussmannization of Paris spoiled all that, a new railway cutting right into his domain. Still, there was the success of which I have spoken. It was piled up steadily. Gavarni soon became in Paris something like an institution. He did not struggle for his renown. There is a pretty story of a colloquy between him and M. Cavé, Director of Fine Arts, about the cross of the Legion of Honor. The official wondered if he cared to have it and on Gavarni's making an affirmative reply, offered him pen and paper with which to make a request for the honor. If the cross depended on his asking for it, said Gavarni, he would never receive it. Later, in 1852, Comte de Nieuwerkerke saw to it that he got the decoration without pleading. He had lacked nothing of appreciation and

recognition when he closed his eyes in 1866, and he could close them with the resignation of an artist who had enjoyed life and left behind him a body of work calculated, in the nature of things, to keep his name alive. The pictures of a painter are comparatively limited in number, and remain more or less stationary. The prints of a lithographer are prodigiously multiplied and carry his art everywhere. The traits of Gavarni are like those of an author, susceptible of the widest circulation. His repute is, I should say, fairly universal now. Is it matched by as extensive an influence? Hardly. Pictorial satire since his day has rarely developed that vein of gaiety which was peculiarly characteristic of him. The other day with this subject in my mind I looked through the "Feu Pierrot" of that jocund humorist, Willette, who should have recaptured something of Gavarni's *verve* if any modern Frenchman could have done so. But the book left a rather dubious taste in my mouth. After the high-bred art of Gavarni the fun of Montmartre seemed a little coarse, the levities of the Chat Noir a little vulgar. It was breeding, yes, that set Gavarni upon such an eminence; it was his distinction and his genius. Also it was something that the modern draftsman strangely neglects, perhaps because he thinks that it lies outside his bailiwick. It was the sense of beauty. It was his possession of that, I think, that made Gavarni what he was, not only a great satirist but a great artist.

XIII

Daumier

XIII

DAUMIER

When Henri Beraldi came to Daumier in the compilation of his invaluable catalogue of "Les Graveurs du XIX^e Siècle" he was a little amused to find what commentators on the subject had already done in the way of comparison. They had discovered points of contact between Daumier and about thirty different masters, to say nothing of the traditions of the Flemish, the Dutch, the Venetian, and the Florentine schools. Daubigny, visiting Rome and seeing the "Moses," cries with enthusiasm: *C'est un Daumier!* Above all things, the draftsman of *Charivari* was the *Michel-Ange de la caricature.* One may be, with Beraldi, a little amused — until one sees that there is in all this but the reflection of a very simple truth. It is that Daumier is of the elect, a mighty artist "with the mark of the gods upon him," to borrow Whistler's phrase. He made his fame primarily as a satirist in black and white, but he triumphed through the possession of a genius transcending his main vocation. Champfleury, who catalogued his works in 1878, the year before he died, wrote his best epitaph: ***Dans le moindre croquis de Daumier on sent la griffe du lion.***

It is none the less fitting because the lion had some of the traits of the *bourgeois*. Born at Marseilles, in 1808, he had for father an humble glazier who by some extraordinary paradox nourished the ambitions of a poet! It is tempting, of course, to infer from that latter circumstance the germ of a certain romanticism in Daumier, only the romanticism is not there. When he was brought up to Paris as a child it was to enter upon a rather humdrum existence. In his teens he was inducted into a clerkship in a book-shop. However poetically inclined the elder Daumier may have been, he was slow to give way to his son's artistic predilections. These received some encouragement, however, from the functionary, Alexandre Lenoir, and presently we find him commencing lithographer under one Zephyrin Belliard. In 1829 he was launched as a caricaturist. He had one characteristic alone calculated to carry him far; he had courage. It was even in this formative period that his "Gargantua," a terrific lampoon upon Louis-Philippe, procured him six months in jail. But he emerged with a career in his hands. Falling under the notice of Charles Philopon, founder of the weekly *Caricature* and the daily *Charivari*, he was closely associated with those publications for years. Some time in the late forties he began to function as a painter also, and this continued until his death, but he never lost touch with the satirical arena. In 1878 there was a memorable exhibition of his works at the

Durand-Ruel Gallery which had a qualified success. He died in retirement at Valmondois in the following year, old, sightless, and in poor circumstances. He had been offered the ribbon of the Légion d'Honneur but had quietly refused it, not caring, like his friend Courbet, to make a theatrical fuss about his declination.

Where do the *bourgeois* traits come in, in the life thus rapidly surveyed? In a certain almost prosaic steadiness of activity. As a satirist he did his job and that was enough. He had among his friends men whose names are like so many challenging banners against a French sky that in his time was nothing if not turbulent. He knew Delacroix and Corot, Barye and Diaz. He lived at the very heart of revolution in French painting, peculiarly at the heart of the romantic movement. But he stayed of unromantic temperament. It is curious, when you look down the vista of his long life, to reckon with the events that made his background. As a child he was old enough to sense the reverberations of Waterloo. He grew up to witness the brief reign of Charles X, the coming of Louis-Philippe, the rise of the Second Empire, and the disasters of 1870. An instinctive republican, he was on the side of liberalism and fought for it through all these permutations with passion and even with venom, so long as the governing powers let the freedom of the press alone. Yet, when that freedom was curtailed, he turned readily enough from

the castigation of politicians to the satirizing of manners, and in the long run you feel that the march of history had comparatively little to do with the development of his genius. The break-up of the old Napoleonic régime and the organization of a new France may have involved him in some cerebral activity, but it did not so inflame his imagination as to give a distinctive color to his work. The inference might be that he remained just a ready journalist. But it is more fitting to deduce, I think, that he remained just a great artist.

Criticism has often diverted itself drawing parallels between Daumier and Gavarni, despite the plausible observation of Philippe de Chennevières that you might as well waste your time drawing a parallel between Poussin and Watteau. The two satirists had this at least in common — they knew how to draw. In spirit, no doubt, they were poles apart. I have before me as I write a design of Daumier's illustrating the "Galop Final" at a masquerade ball. The delicious lightness and gayety that Gavarni would have given it are somehow missing. In none of the drawings that Daumier dedicated to the feminine levities in the Parisian spectacle is there anything of the exquisite *frou-frou* in which Gavarni excelled. On the other hand, there is composition, there is movement, and there is superbly puissant line. At a dinner at Daubigny's a fellow artist once said to Daumier that a lithograph of his, the famous "Ventre Legislatif,"

made him think of the Sistine Chapel. It sounds like a *boutade*, but one can understand that the design made him think at least of the grand style. That was Daumier's great resource, that is where you recognize the claw of the lion. He drew with a certain largeness and sweep, a certain noble force. I say "noble" advisedly, because, while the end of the artist was ridicule, and he would exaggerate the points of a physiognomy sometimes to an almost repulsive degree, there is something which you can only designate as grandeur about the linear simplicity and power through which he gains his effect. You see this magic of his working supremely in his caricatures, and the mere bulk of them, the mere salience they possess in his life, would be sufficient justification for those who prefer to see their Daumier in black-and-white. I can feel with them. There are lithographs of his that rejoice my soul, partly through their great draftsmanship, and partly through their magnificent affirmation of the very genius of lithography. Daumier knew all the secrets of the stone. But, thinking of him as I most like to think of him, thinking of the satirist as artist, I care for him especially as a painter.

He was more than the Michael Angelo of caricature. He was something of a Michael Angelo in paint. He was that inasmuch as he was a great master of form. In 1848 the proclamation of the Republic gave occasion for the opening at the Beaux-

Arts of a competition for a symbolical decoration. More than five hundred artists entered. Daumier's sketch was marked the eleventh in the group of twenty chosen as indicating the painters to take part in the definitive *concours*. I will not assert that it is a portentous conception, but there is no denying the monumental force and unity of the design. It invites not unreasonably, I believe, the assumption that if fate had so ordained it Daumier might have developed into a remarkable mural painter. But it is not obvious that fate ever dowered him with the grandiose imaginative faculties that would have filled out his grandiose mode of tackling composition and the figure. He had no traffic with Olympus. He kept his feet upon the solid earth and found his inspiration in obscure humanity. Banville has pictured him in his big, austere attic on the Ile St. Louis, watching for hours the scenes below him along the banks of the Seine. He did for the workaday figures of the city what Millet did for their brethren of the fields. Like Millet, he found a measure of pathos in the lives of the humble, and he would paint a poor washerwoman trudging along with her burden and her child, mixing positive tenderness with his sympathy. For the submerged this bitter satirist always had sympathy. But, again like Millet, he utterly escapes mawkishness in his idyls of the pave. It is his feeling for form that is essentially his safeguard against sentimentality. He sees the figure simply and grandly,

gets the elements of structure with a broad, synthetic stroke, and finally, with that composer's felicity of his, places his form consummately within the rectangle. His range was not very wide, yet it was sufficiently varied. Besides the life of the riverside he would paint the habitués of the law-courts, the people of the circus, the doctor and his patient, the travellers on the railroad, and, occasionally, the amateur turning over his prints. Once or twice he dealt with scenes in the theatre, and there is a considerable series of his pictures given to the celebration of Don Quixote and his adventures. These last represent, of course, imaginative excursions, but, as I have indicated, it is not imagination but observation and human interest that especially denote his genius. He had a strong grip upon character. With his lifelong study of physiognomy in the political world it was inevitable that when he came to paint his pictures he would paint them with the "seeing eye." The interesting thing is that as a painter he kept that eye so free from jaundice. The ferocity of the caricatures falls from him like a garment when he takes up the brush. A trace of the old bitterness will creep into the studies of the *avocat*, but when he paints his Seine folk or the homespun types of the *troisième classe* on the railroad he is only the friendly *bourgeois* depicting his own kind. Only that, plus the great artist enveloping his people in the glamour of line and mass, flinging over them the mysterious beauty that flows from

light and shadow, and adding to them that which sums up all the rest — the accent of style.

His style is in the key of all those traits of largeness and nobility which I have endeavored to point out in his draftsmanship and his composition. It is, too, intensely personal. That disposition among his commentators, which I have noted, to ally him with one master or another, does not leave him, as a matter of fact, in any sense an eclectic type. You may say that there is an Hogarthian amplitude about his humor. You may find a savagery in him akin to Goya. But these and other strains in Daumier are in nowise derivative. He is his own man. His technic, his energy, and pre-eminently his style are new-minted and "of the centre." There is a Daumier cult, and its divagations are sometimes a little overdone. Beraldi, as I have remarked, found the *rapprochements* merely droll. If one were to swallow whole the ideas of the eulogists, one would, as he says, have to retouch Delaroche's famous hemicycle at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and, erasing the heads of all the masters portrayed, substitute for each one the head of Daumier. The funniest of these oddities in criticism is that of the recent biographer who would see in Daumier a forefather of the Post-Impressionists, as naïve a piece of body-snatching as the erection of Ingres into a spiritual ancestor of Matisse. The truth is that there is nothing recondite or mysterious about the status of this artist. He was a good

craftsman. He knew how to draw and how to paint. He looked at the life about him and mirrored it truthfully in his art. He surcharged it with no romantic fervors. This comrade of Delacroix had nothing of his friend's emotion and nothing of his *flair* for color, but was content with a quiet tonality in which he leaned far more toward the "brown sauce" of Rembrandt than toward the luminous hues which the Impressionists were bringing into view just as he was about to pass from the scene. Exactly as he was unaffected by the splendors of Delacroix, so he did nothing to emulate the silvery vibrations of his beloved Corot. I may remark in passing that he was as sensitive as Corot in the delineation of landscape. His backgrounds of earth, trees, and sky are always just, true, and well designed, and sometimes they are very beautiful. Did he care for beauty in the sense of grace, of charm, of that subtle enrichment which makes a picture one of the poetic things of life? I hardly think so. It may be that his spirit was too much subdued to the sardonic stuff in which he worked for so many years. When he touches the antique, it leaves him cold. There are some repellent profiles among his "Physionomies Tragico-Clasiques." The beauty in Daumier is of a grave, even stern, order. Beside the suavity of Ingres his ruggedness seems that of granite. It is, in its way, as beguiling. Baudelaire noted that a long time ago, when he associated Daumier as a draftsman with Ingres

and Delacroix. Each was different from the others, but he doffed his hat to all of them. Each, to return to our leading motive, had style, the indefinable elevation which imbues workmanship with a personal, distinguishing mark and lifts it to a higher power. It is the mark of the creative artist, the original, born artist. That is why nobody can write about Daumier without seeking to illuminate his analysis here and there by alluding to one or the other of the masters. There is a kind of solidarity among them. They stand for one idiom, one tradition. Daumier is not the tremendous portent that some of the zealous would represent him to be. He had limitations, as I have sought to indicate. None the less he used the idiom of the masters, belonged to their tradition, and he is of their glorious company.

XIV

Courbet

XIV

COURBET

On June 10, 1819, Gustave Courbet was born at Ornans, in a then almost sequestered corner of eastern France. In manhood he became the friend of Corot. As a landscape painter who was the contemporary of the Barbizon group, it would have been natural enough for him to have adopted its romanticized naturalism. But Courbet followed his own gait, developed a body of independent ideas, and emerged from an extraordinary clash of personalities with a clearly defined celebrity. He remains a singular figure in the history of French painting, one to whom artists all over the world have reason for paying cordial tribute. The fact was happily recognized in 1919 at the Metropolitan Museum, where Mr. Bryson Burroughs, curator of paintings, had the inspiration to invent and organize an exhibition commemorative of Courbet's centenary. From private and public collections he drew important examples, assembling some two score pictures in one of the stateliest rooms in the museum. Hung in a single line, they made a noble effect. Nowhere else, save in Paris, could so brilliant a memorial have been arranged. And not even in Paris could a collection of this kind meet

with warmer appreciation than in New York. Courbet's qualities are peculiarly sympathetic to us. There are marked points of contact between the genius of Courbet and the genius of American painting.

The character of Courbet as a man — and it is forced upon every commentator who approaches his works — is hardly as lovable as one would like it to be. Thirty-odd years ago an American enthusiast, Mr. Titus Munson Coan, made a pilgrimage to the painter's old haunts in Franche-Comté, and printed in *The Century* some interesting impressions received from friends and neighbors who had known Courbet well. "He is not very kindly remembered," said one of these former comrades of his. In Paris he had some notable associates. Sainte-Beuve, we are told, was one of his faithful friends. But this son of a farmer never quite adjusted himself to the suaver modes of urban life. He was eccentric to the point of violence. "In 1864," his friend Buchon recalled, "when cold weather came, he bought a bed-quilt from a Jew. He made a hole in the middle of it for his head. That was his winter overcoat." He was prosperous enough to have gone abroad in furs if he had so chosen. But the bed-quilt attracted attention, which he craved. He had, indeed, a passion for *réclame*, and posed as a *montagnard* because it brought him notoriety. Late in life this histrionic disposition led to the one tragic episode of his career. When the Vendôme column was pulled down under the Commune his flamboyant

radicalism had so far involved him with the vandals who actually brought it to the dust that in the upshot he was held responsible by the authorities. The reconstruction of the column, under the Republic, was at his cost, and he had a taste of jail into the bargain before flight into Switzerland gave him a few more years of broken life. I allude to his personal traits and adventures chiefly for the sake of contrast. They are antithetical to Courbet's rôle as an artist. There he was, paradoxically, nothing if not simple and sincere. There is only one point at which it is necessary to consider the man and the painter together. That is the point at which we have to reckon with his taste.

In the definitive biography of Courbet, by M. Georges Riat, there is an amusing anecdote of the Empress Eugénie. She went to see Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair" one day, and after admiring its magnificent Percherons turned to "Les Baigneuses," of Courbet. Looking at the powerful semi-nude woman, whose back is turned to us in this picture, she asked, "Is this also a Percheron?" It was a fair epigram, one directing attention to a strain in Courbet which cannot be ignored. He was no super-refined searcher after beauty, but took nature as he found it, and his instinct, his taste, was to find it rather plain. There is a picture of his which might seem to contradict this observation. It is "The Woman in the Waves," which has the sensuous charm of a Boucher. Con-

sider also "The Woman with the Mirror," better known as "La Belle Irlandaise." When he painted this portrait of Whistler's famous model he responded as sensitively as Whistler could have done to the gracious appeal of his sitter. But pictures like these are the exceptions which prove the rule. Courbet had no abstract ideas of beauty. It was the visible fact, not the dream, that concerned him. A far more significant painting is the sylvan nude, "The Source," which immediately makes one think of the great study of the same subject by Ingres in the Louvre. In the work of Ingres the young model is synthesized into a classically elevated design. In the work of Courbet she is delineated as in a portrait. Convention is utterly excluded from the painter's thought. I might cite other individual pieces which, like "The Source," add to the light needed for a thorough appreciation of Courbet; but the most useful clew is, perhaps, to be developed by a survey of his work as a whole.

Is not its outstanding virtue the virtue of variety? There are landscapes and nudes, portraits, marines, flower studies and hunting pictures in Courbet's cosmos. And the special merit of this variety is one taking us to the very core of Courbet's art. Every artist accepts the peril of repeating himself. Indeed, it is not necessarily a peril. Who could disparage Corot, for example, because he spent long years in painting "Corots," which is to say landscapes

sharing in such a strong family likeness that one could tell them in the dark. Corot was richer in sheer genius than was Courbet. But in this particular matter Courbet was the stronger artist. In all his life he scarcely ever painted a "Courbet." You know him, it is true, for certain notes of color, and, of course, for certain technical methods, but variety, with him, means the transmutation of each new picture into a new adventure. He had small patience with crystallized pattern in other painters, and he had no patience with it at all in his own work. M. Riat tells us that in the artist's student days he was all for the great realists, for Ribera, Zurburan, Velasquez, Von Ostade, Holbein, and Rembrandt. When he had an exhibition of his own in the '50s he inscribed the words *Le Réalisme* on the door. It introduced not so much a type of picture as a point of view. That is what made the exhibition at the Museum so interesting. It was composed not of forty "Courbets," but of forty works of art in which you could see reflected a broad attitude, the attitude of an artist whose sole conception of picture-making was the recording of the truth.

Consider how isolated he was in this philosophy. Truth was precious to the men of 1830, but it was all interwoven with romantic emotion. Even a type as austere as Millet tended to heighten the truth with grandiose elements of design and style. Courbet adhered to the bedrock of realism. Design, for exam-

ple, as he cultivated it, was on the whole a rather accidental factor. His pictures are well enough put together, but we feel that this is due to a lucky selection of motives. It never comes from the intervention of a definite principle of composition. In the absence of such a principle, in fact, Courbet's most ambitious schemes are curiously defective. Witness the famous "Enterrement a Ornans," in the Louvre. Balance is left, as it were, to take care of itself. But the truth of life is unmistakable. To note the fact is to pose Courbet's whole case. In the arts of composition, in the refinements of draftsmanship and color, in the magic of style, he may not be one of the demigods; but in the matter of a kind of central vitality he is one of the great men of the nineteenth century. It is the vitality, moreover, of an original painter. There is nothing of the photographer about Courbet's realism. It is too personal for that, too artistic. There was, after all, an element of charm in that rough temperament of his, which seems nominally to have held charm at arm's length. He was indifferent to beauty as Ingres saw it, with his passion for Raphaelesque form. He cared nothing for the lyrical inspiration of a Corot. But he transmogrified his facts in spite of himself, made his realism the vehicle for impressions that sometimes, at all events, are merely lovely.

A good example is supplied in the "Spring Flowers," painted in the prison of Sainte-Pélagie in 1871, when

he was obliged to ruminate in seclusion on his ill-fated connection with the destruction of the Vendôme Column. Fantin-Latour himself never painted a more exquisite mass of blooms. Notable, too, for its vein of æsthetic delicacy is one of his marines, the picture called simply "The Mediterranean." There are some of the earlier pictures of Whistler of which it may be said that "Courbet might have painted them." By the same token we may say of "The Mediterranean" that "Whistler might have painted it." In color, particularly, this is an almost poetic piece of work. I have spoken of Courbet's variety. The museum exhibition afforded really extraordinary illustrations of the theme. From a marine like "The Mediterranean" you could turn to a full-length portrait like the "Madame Crocq: La Femme au Gant," or to a nude like "The Woman with the Parrot," or to a major hunting scene like the brilliant picture of "The Quarry," lent by the Boston Museum. To this diversity in Courbet we are bound to return, over and over again. But always I would emphasize more especially the significance of his landscapes, for these, more perhaps than any other of his paintings, typify Courbet's influence at large.

It would be the easiest thing in the world to make invidious comparisons here, to speak of what he missed on the subjective side of landscape painting. He missed whole worlds of such enchantment a Corot and Dupré, Diaz and Rousseau, made their

own. But the "natural magic" which he gained instead is a thing of almost thrilling power. In such a landscape as "The Fringe of the Forest," in which design, as such, is well nigh negligible, the expression of woodland depths, of tree forms and ground textures is nothing less than superb. Nature is given her chance. She is interpreted with the least possible interposition of a personal habit of painting. It is as though she guided Courbet's brush and, in the process, communicated to him something of her own energy. He never founded a school, in the sense of passing on a technical method. But he has been a tremendous fertilizing force in that he has pointed the way to an honest, clear-eyed mode of attack. Because he dealt in low tones, knowing nothing of the luminosity of the Impressionists, his paintings leave a curious impression of old-masterish sobriety. But it is not in his forest greens, dull blacks, and tawny hues generally that Courbet alone denotes his alliance with the past. It is his truth that fixes his rank, that makes him an old master, and places him also among the most progressive of the moderns.

XV

Puvis de Chavannes

XV

PUVIS DE CHAVANNES

A BRIEF note in *Le Gaulois* one day reported certain ceremonies which had, as a matter of fact, a high significance. They were held at Lyons, in the house in which Pierre Puvis de Chavannes was born on December 14, 1824. Faithful as always to the memory of her illustrious dead, France officially recognized the centenary of one of her greatest painters. We, too, have reason to remember him. He did some of his finest work for the walls of the Boston Public Library, and many of our artists have profited by study of his genius. To the mural decorator and to every student of art who cares for monumental design he is one of the outstanding European figures, an incomparable master. Why, I wonder, has not a more voluminous literature gathered about his fame? Marius Vachon published a good book on his work in 1895. A condensed monograph has since appeared from the pen of M. André Michel, really a collection of illustrations with sketchy text. The exhaustive work by M. Léonce Bénédite has not, that I know of, as yet been published. Marcelle Adam made an amusing brochure out of his numerous caricatures, and of course there has been much writing on the

subject in the French periodicals. But very little has been done to bring the man as well as the artist into view, and from all the printed matter available I have gathered less than I have received from M. Joseph Durand-Ruel, who from his boyhood was intimately acquainted with Puvis de Chavannes. I regret my own lost opportunities. He was a painter I greatly desired to meet; I was frequently in Paris prior to his death in 1898, and I knew men like Rodin, who could easily have taken me to his home on the Place Pigalle or out to the studio at Neuilly. Perhaps I was a little hesitant about tackling his Olympian aloofness.

It is a trait which disengages itself decisively enough from the facts that have been made known about him. Puvis de Chavannes seems to have been a man apart, from the beginning. He came from the old Burgundian noblesse, and he was not unconscious of it, reserved, a man of a kind of hauteur, giving of himself freely to those he loved but on the whole keeping himself to himself. The portrait which he painted at twenty-five shows a lean, aristocratic visage, very thoughtful in expression. More expressive of his legend is the portentous full-length painted by his friend Bonnat. It is that of a stately academician. There was nothing academic about him, it is true, but the canvas is eloquent of his dignity, his gravity, his mundane weight.

His father was an engineer and he was destined to

follow in the paternal footsteps, but illness interrupted the preliminaries and a journey to Italy gave a new direction to his ideas. Initiated into the world of pictures, he came back resolved to be an artist. He threw himself upon his chosen career not only with artistic ardor, but with the warm, human energy of youth, and said, long afterward, that he did not know more about the technic of his craft at this time than he knew about the *argot* of the *rapin.* He liked to tell the story of his encounter with the wife of Lamartine, when he was spending a vacation at Mâcon. She asked him if he painted, and, on his replying in the affirmative, wanted to know if he drew "the figure," meaning did he draw a portrait. "The face?" he answered. "I draw the entire man." His master then was the now fairly forgotten painter, Henri Scheffer, but later, following a second trip to Italy, in the company of his friend Beauderon de Vermeron, he was for a short time in the studio of Delacroix, and after that enjoyed the criticism of Couture. I cannot trace in detail the history of his contacts with that remarkable painter and decorator, Theodore Chasseriau, but I know they were close, on the authority of John La Farge, who told me about them long ago. It used to amuse La Farge, by the way, to recall the time when Puvis de Chavannes came into the studio of Couture, where the young American was working, and picked him out to pose for one of his figures. La Farge couldn't remember

which one it was, and would joke about some day getting a lot of photographs together and hunting up his physiognomy. There is another personal souvenir of that distant period which I may cite here. The Princess Cantacuzène belonged to Chasseriau's circle, and one of the most brilliant of his drawings is a portrait of her. Puvis de Chavannes succeeded him in her friendship and they were married in his old age.

In some cases these questions of master and pupil might assume importance. With Puvis de Chavannes they are of slight moment. He was his own man. That, to be sure, was one of the reasons why he became a great painter. He took his own line and fought his battle in his own way. He had to fight. They let him into the Salon of 1850, but in 1852 they refused him, and for some years he met the same repulse. There were writers on his side, Théophile Gautier and Paul de Saint-Victor among them, but there were others who could not endure his work and in officialdom there were as many malcontents, if not more. It did not matter. He went on making studies and painting, especially making studies. The nature of those compositions on which his renown is based might well beguile the student to inquire into the matter of the master's intellectual equipment. Paintings like his must necessarily, we say, imply a deep culture. Vachon gives the best commentary upon this idea in a passage he quotes from the painter,

asked about the genesis of his designs. "I am ignorant," he replied. "I have no philosophy, or history, or science. I am occupied with my profession." He was sheer artist and, into the bargain, a type of appalling industry.

When he settled in Paris in 1852, joining with his friends Bida, Ricard, and one or two others in the organization of a happy circle, he fixed upon an apartment on the Place Pigalle, which was to remain his home for nearly half a century. He was a rich man, with an annual income of some 200,000 francs, and though there was a studio attached to his quarters he did none of his work there. Painting on a large scale from the outset, he built himself a great studio at Neuilly, with all the mechanism required for the manipulation of vast canvases. Between these two places he led with unbroken regularity a life partly Spartan and partly luxurious. Since he wanted a full day for his work, he would see his friends only in the morning. You could call as early as six but not later than nine. There were always devotees there. One of them was the famous Marcelin Desboutin, nominally the oddest of associates, for he was as untidy a Bohemian as ever lived, and his comrade was nothing if not the pink of all the amenities. But Desboutin, like Puvis de Chavannes, was the great gentleman to his finger-tips. Legend has it, indeed, that he was really the Marquis des Boutins. M. Clément-Janin, in his biography of the artist, scouts

the idea of a noble origin, but it would seem to have had the sanction of Puvis de Chavannes, at all events. They were companions from adolescence, and Desboutin was nearly always on hand in the mornings when his friend sat in his white dressing-gown and "held court." I gather that he warmly welcomed all manner of artists to these early soirées, but was rarely intimate with any of them. Besides Desboutin, among those who knew him well, there was Degas (who was entitled to call himself the Comte de Gas), and there were inevitably divers others, but most of the visitors were, so to say, on professional terms alone with him.

While he talked — and it is said that he was a charming, gracious, deeply interesting talker — he would have his breakfast, consisting of a glass of milk, without so much as a bit of toast or a biscuit. Then at nine he would start out for the long walk to Neuilly, a matter of about two miles and a half. Arrived there, he would work, standing, until the light failed, and without a bite of luncheon. In the dusk he would walk home, dress with the meticulous care of a man of fashion, and dine out in the great world where his personality and his conversational powers made him a constantly desired guest. He was a mighty trencherman. With nothing to keep him going all day but that minute draught of milk he had a heroic appetite for dinner, and his hosts took pains to see that his gigantic hunger was satisfied

by food enough for two. He was otherwise sobriety itself. A very little watered wine was all that he wanted to wash down his Gargantuan repasts. As an artist he remained detached from groups as such. He knew Degas, as I have observed, and Manet, Monet, Renoir, and the rest. He had friends, too, in the academic camp. Bonnat was one of his intimates. But he made few ties and thereby suffered no losses. A trait to be mentioned appositely here is his admirable discretion. He never disparaged any one he disliked. M. Durand-Ruel tells me that he often saw him smile but never knew him to laugh.

At Neuilly his labors were assisted by a corps of pupils, who served as instruments in the execution of his paintings. He chose them with great care, paid them well, and altogether carried himself there, as elsewhere, with marked poise and dignity. The circumstances of his whole life seem so ordered, so measured, so beautifully balanced, and in so many ways so successful that it seems positively incongruous to find that his work was long a drug on the market. He put high prices on his paintings, disdaining to cheapen them, and was unperturbed when they did not sell. The elder Durand-Ruel bought the famous "Décollation de Saint Jean-Baptiste" out of the Salon of 1870 for 5,000 francs, and for fifteen years was unable to dispose of it. At the end of that time Puvis de Chavannes, with his characteristic gesture of the *grand seigneur*, insisted upon buying

it back. He had that majestic way with him. When he painted the first of the great decorations in the Musée de Picardie, at Amiens, he heard that it was to have neighbors from other hands as yet undecided upon. Promptly he offered to fill all the remaining spaces at his own expense, counting the serious cost as nothing in the balance against the pain of seeing his work in juxtaposition with things in a totally different key. The story of the Boston panels shows delightfully how, for once, the tables were turned upon him. McKim was resolved that Puvis de Chavannes should do the work, and when the committee waited upon the artist it was prepared to make any concessions. He was busy? They could accept any delay. He had not seen the building in Boston? They could send him a model. Then came up the question of cost, and he thought he had them. He was really overborne with work, he didn't want to do the thing, and by naming a prohibitive price he would scare off these importunate Americans. They blandly met his figure and he surrendered, to find, as it developed, peculiar happiness in working out one of the loveliest decorative schemes in his career.

I have alluded to the modesty with which he spoke of his resources in the production of all those schemes of his. The truth is, of course, that he was a born poet, with a brain teeming with ideas and an imagination that instinctively played in the grand manner

around grand themes. Apropos of one of his easel pictures, "L'Enfant Prodigue," he used to say that what started him painting it was the sheaf of sketches he had enthusiastically made from a herd of swine once observed in the country. But we may agree with M. Michel not to take this *boutade* too much *au pied de la lettre*. The composition has too much tenderness for that, too much elevation. Elevation, nobility, are inseparable from the work of Puvis de Chavannes. He had, far more than Chasseriau, whose powers of *ordonnance* he otherwise recalls, "the large utterance of the early gods." There is something primeval in the sense of space he gives you, of imposing space peopled by heroic figures. And his heroic forms are always tinctured by beauty. In "Le Travail" and "Le Repos," which date back to the early sixties, his men and women have an antique amplitude and simplicity. They are rather massy figures, types of almost rude strength. Yet they have grace, too, the grace that comes from rich contours, full flowing lines, and, above all, a kind of innate purity. As time went on his faculty for thus transmogrifying life only gained in potency. For whatever he did he required a generous scale. Gautier noted this early in the painter's career. He painted many easel pictures, *chevalet* pieces, as the French call them, and some of them are among his most felicitous performances, but there can be no question about the essential gravitation of his genius to big wall spaces.

He found them in divers important French cities — in Amiens, in Marseilles, and, when once his long fight with the augurs was over, in Paris. His work beautifies the Panthéon, the Sorbonne, and the Hôtel de Ville. Once neglected, he became one of the recognized glories of French art, and with the good will of the government there went also an increase in public appreciation. It dated most decisively from the exhibition that Durand-Ruel organized in 1886. That silenced the scoffers. For the rest of his life Puvis de Chavannes was a classic in his own country, and was so accepted throughout the world. He is a classic, but that is not to say that he is classical. On the contrary, he breaks with the term as it is implied in the works of Ingres, say, and cultivates a spirit far removed from the spirit of that marmoreal master. There is nothing Greek about Puvis de Chavannes save that humanity which you may discern in the idyls of Theocritus. He lodges his symbolical figures in landscapes that are Virgilian in their sweetness. His groups are freely arranged. There is no Raphaelesque symmetry to his design. The equilibrium he establishes is almost naturalistic. He is nearer to Giotto than he is to the more sophisticated craftsmen of the high Renaissance. Least of all has he any points of contact with eighteenth-century formalism as it was understood in France, and as it has been carried through more modern phases by certain of his contemporaries.

This side of Chasseriau, Flandrin, and Delacroix, French mural decoration has been largely an affair of picture-making on a large scale. The huge *machin* which is graduated from the Salon to some place in a provincial museum, even when conceived originally for its ultimate position, remains very much the product of a Salon formula. Between Baudry and Besnard there stretches an immeasurable acreage of mural decoration which is picturesque, realistic, effective, and in its commemoration of historical episodes undeniably clever — but it is never an integral part of an architectural ensemble. Baudry offered a handsome solution of this problem in his work for the Opéra, and Besnard has functioned to the same good purpose, but neither of them ever had the feeling for a wall that Puvis de Chavannes had. He would build up a broad, serene landscape background, distribute his figures against it with the happiest fidelity to that axiom of Whistler's, that the artist is known by what he omits, and, when he laid down the brush, he had somehow given to the wall a new integrity, as just and convincing as it is original. His originality consisted in a grandiose simplicity, a very fresh and interesting development of symbolic motives, and an extraordinarily beautiful gamut of color. It was a gamut of light tones, on the whole, though his love of landscape sometimes led him into wonderfully deep and resonant passages, as in the glorious background of "L'Eté," in the Hôtel de Ville. But the

tints by which you know Puvis de Chavannes are delicate tints of pale green, quiet violet and rose, subdued white, and an all-pervading gray. I have touched upon his tenderness. He is never more tender than in his color. He drew with great force and suppleness. He modelled with the same august authority. That ravishing fabric of coloration which distinguishes his art is superimposed upon a groundwork of superb construction.

He is a type of French industry, of French discipline, but he had inspiration if ever a painter had it, and the splendor of his work lies in nothing more than in its quality of creative individuality. With the possible exception of Chasseriau — and that only in slight degree — he had no predecessors in his school, and he has left no followers. The accent of Puvis de Chavannes is as personal as that of Gluck, with whose music, for some indefinable reason, I am always inclined to associate his designs. He had, no doubt, the minor traits that do so much to make us all kin. He was very sensitive, almost unduly so. Marcelle Adam tells us what happened after Dalou had one day permitted himself to speak lightly of a painting by the master. Several days later Puvis de Chavannes went to dine at the house of Philippe Gille and caught sight of his critic at the foot of the garden. He disappeared as if by magic and presently sent in a note to Madame Gille: "I have seen Dalou. I could not stay. I could not stay." But there was

nothing really little in either the man or his work. "To think that he has lived among us!" cried Rodin. "To think that this genius, worthy of the most radiant epochs of art, has spoken to us! That I have seen him, have pressed his hand! It seems as if I had pressed the hand of Nicolas Poussin!" The sculptor made a bust of him, which the painter did not like. He thought it, in fact, a caricature! But there are some words of Rodin's, on the other hand, which I may fittingly quote: "He carried his head high. His skull, solid and round, seemed made to wear a helmet. His arched chest seemed accustomed to carry the breastplate. It was easy to imagine him at Pavia fighting for his honor by the side of Francis I." Thus he endures among the historic painters of France, high-bred, gallant, splendid, doing great things nobly.

XVI

Degas

I. As Painter and Draftsman
II. As a Man
III. As a Sculptor
IV. As a Collector

XVI

DEGAS

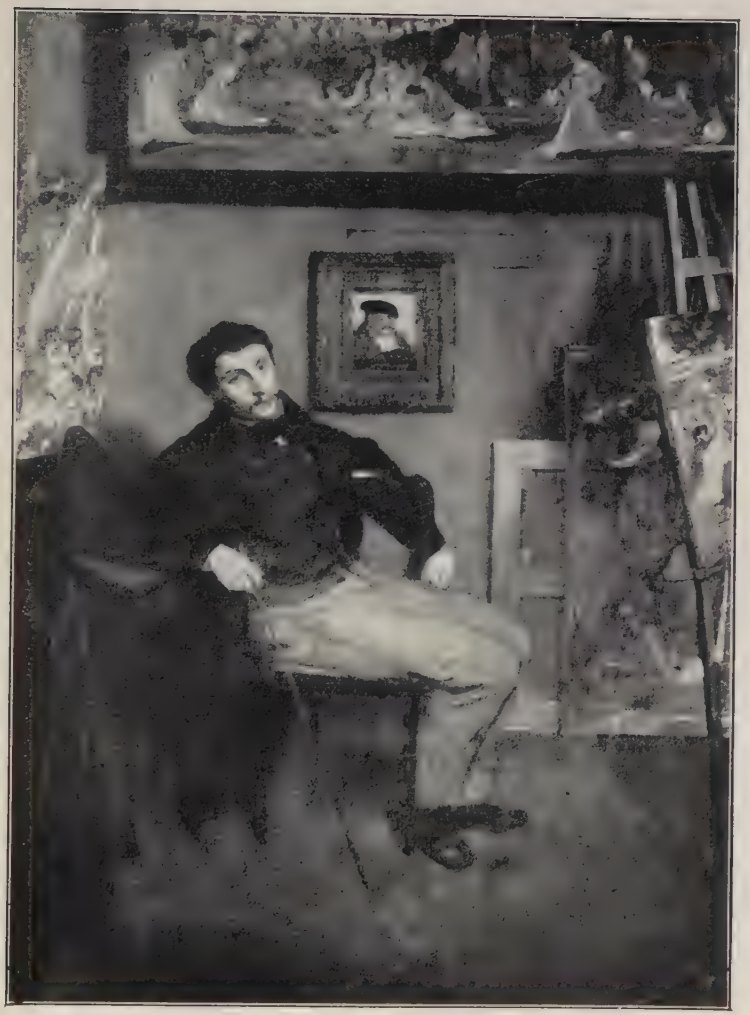
I

AS PAINTER AND DRAFTSMAN

Degas was born in Paris in 1834. He died in the same city in 1917, not only full of years, but quite literally full of honors, universally acclaimed as one of the great masters of French art. He left a prodigious body of work behind him in his studio. Glancing over the eight catalogues of the sales through which it was dispersed in 1918 and 1919, I find that they run, all told, to nearly three thousand numbers. For the paintings and drawings in this mass of treasure there was the keenest competition among collectors and dealers, competition productive of a fortune — over which, by the way, the heirs have had a pretty quarrel. Several examples of Degas have passed into the Louvre. In a word, nothing has been lacking to stamp him as an artist of the type the French like to call "illustrious." His art and his ideas come under discussion as the art and ideas of a classic.

It is customary to group Degas with the Impressionists, and this is natural enough. He was friendly with them, and especially with Manet, for whom he

had, indeed, a deep and lasting affection. He was allied for long years, as they were, too, with that great figure among dealers, Paul Durand-Ruel; and where his potent influence went it carried Degas and Monet, say, together, thus fortuitously emphasizing an association which might not otherwise have appeared to be particularly close. Yet all the time Degas remained really an isolated character. The reserve which he showed in his ordinary walk and demeanor indicates also the aloofness of his art. In a superficial view you would say that Degas was a man of the world. He had the right traits for social intercourse, if he chose to exploit them. He had, to begin with, a vitriolic wit, and they say that he used to shine in the famous salon of the Princess Mathilde. As his pictures show, he frequented the races and the *coulisses*. Once, when he was in his prime, an officer of the government asked him if there was anything he could do for him, expecting that Degas would want a ribbon or something of that sort. The artist replied that what he really desired was a free pass for life into the precincts of the Opéra, so that he could study the ballet to his heart's content. Yes, decidedly, Degas had plenty of mundane contacts and enjoyed them. But they left his art in essence untouched. There never was, spiritually speaking, a more redoubtable recluse. There are many piquant stories about him, but the most characteristic one I know is the story disclosing the hermit in him. Talking with a friend he said:



Portrait of a Man in the Studio of an Artist

FROM THE PAINTING BY DEGAS

"You know Forain? Well, he has a telephone." "Yes," replied the friend, "I suppose he has." "Do you know what they do?" continued Degas. "They ring him up and they ring him up." "Naturally," said the other. "What of it?" "Sacré nom de Dieu!" exclaimed the master. "But he answers them!" A telephone is unthinkable in the apartment in which Degas barricaded himself for years, sealing his door to all save a few friends like Rouart, Durand-Ruel, Forain, or Manet. It would be a mistake to infer from all this that he was just a curmudgeon. He could be not only friendly, but helpful. To Mary Cassatt, for example, he was a stimulating comrade, and only the other day, when I met in New York the Parisianized Spaniard, José María Sert, I was interested to learn that he owed his good drawing in a measure to his having profited by the kindly counsel of Degas. When he came out of his shell he could be delightful. Only he preferred mostly to stay in it, to stay detached from the ordinary currents of contemporary art.

Look to his origins and you look to influences which persisted in him all his life long. This intensely modern artist, a progressive of the progressives, the very antithesis of all things academic, was one of the loyalest disciples of the old masters that ever lived. In his formative period as a young man he haunted the Louvre and the great Italian galleries. There is a story that his copy of Poussin's "Rape of

the Sabines" cost him a year's labor. He copied Clouet and Holbein and sat reverently at the feet of Ghirlandajo. He adored the Primitives. His master at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts had been Lamothe, who had been the pupil of Ingres and Flandrin. A framer of artistic pedigrees might say that Ingres begat Lamothe and Lamothe begat Degas. He went to Rome in the fifties and foregathered with men like Elie Delaunay, Bonnat, and the sculptors Chapu and Paul Dubois. He knew also in Rome the romanticist Gustave Moreau and the composer Bizet, but theirs was not the spirit that communicated itself to him. He was altogether on the side of those conservative ideas which prevailed at the Villa Medicis. I remember coming upon a striking portrait in the museum at Bayonne that he painted of Bonnat, the young Bonnat in a monumental top hat. It is the souvenir of a friendship rooted in a mutual respect for certain ideals of art. Nevertheless they did not tread a common path. Bonnat returned from Italy a predestined *Salonnier*. Degas was ever to disdain the official standard under which his comrade enlisted. But they were united irrevocably in a passion for research into form. The direction Degas took is interestingly suggested by one of the earliest incidents in his career. In 1861 he tackled a subject which, as a subject, was well calculated to qualify him for the Salon, "Semiramis Building the Walls of Babylon." The picture is no masterpiece. But that

is the only epithet to be applied to one of the studies he made for it, the famous study for a virtually headless draped figure seen in profile. That proclaims — as early as 1861 — the true Degas, the consummate disciple of Ingres.

George Moore has a charming story of a visit of his to the dusty apartment in the Rue Pigalle. His eye went straight to a drawing placed upon the sideboard, a faint drawing in red chalk, and his quick movement toward it brought an exclamation from Degas. "Ah! look at it," he said. "I bought it only a few days ago; it is a drawing of a female hand by Ingres; look at those finger-nails, see how they are indicated. That's my idea of genius, a man who finds a hand so lovely, so difficult to render, that he will shut himself up all his life, content to do nothing else but indicate finger-nails." As Moore says, the whole of the artist's life is summed up in this passage. And, apropos, there is an important distinction to observe. I have gone down to Montauban to study the vast collection of the drawings by Ingres there preserved. I have seen almost as many of the drawings of Degas. Both masters are equally free from the implication that might, in error, be drawn from the foregoing anecdote. Neither of them, shutting himself up all his life to indicate finger-nails, worked in the spirit of the Oriental spending years in the carving of a cherry stone. Both, on the contrary, drew with extraordinary gusto for the vital

elements in life. They were miraculous craftsmen absorbed in the study of nature.

Degas didn't take over from Ingres a style, a mode of draftsmanship. What the older man stimulated in him, rather, was an inborn instinct for truth and for the rectitude of drawing. It is this that links him with the old masters, explains his youthful devotion to them. He was a true Frenchman, which is to say a true child of tradition. Nothing is more foolish than to think of tradition as an academic formula. It is simply the tribute which the genuine artist pays to the wisdom of the finer spirits in the art of all ages. Degas, with tradition in his blood, proceeded in perfect freedom to express himself. The mood in which he designed his Semiramis picture went down the wind. The mood in which he drew his incomparable studies for it governed the development of his entire career, and he was never more essentially classical, more essentially the disciple of Ingres, than when he used his great draftsmanship to define the most modern of forms.

What did Degas make of life in his art? What did he see, by preference, in the great human spectacle, and what were his thoughts about it? Dip into the first of those catalogues to which I have referred, the one given to paintings he possessed from other hands, and you will find Delacroix as well as Ingres, Puvis de Chavannes as well as Manet. But appreciation of the chief of the Romantics had no more effect upon

the determination of his own gait than had the tranquil inspiration of the great mural painter. The actuality of the moment was the object upon which Degas kept his eye. A cool spirit, as of scientific inquiry, presides over practically everything that he ever did, the exceptions to the rule being so few as to be almost negligible. The outstanding exception is, of course, the celebrated "Intérieur" in the Pope collection. The story, if it has one to tell, remains singularly obscure, a characteristic negation of that anecdotic vein so common in the Salon that the master hated. He may have started to paint the picture in the key of Balzac, but he wound up in the key of Degas — undramatic, passionless, prosaic. I have thought sometimes of the naturalistic school of French fiction when I have stood before the painting that passed with the Camondo collection into the Louvre, "L'Absinthe," it is so Zolaesque a transcript from life, but nothing is done by Degas to underline such tragic ingredients as may belong to the composition. He paints what he sees and leaves the moral to take care of itself, obviously having no emotion whatever to spend on the subject. I recall a third painting lying off his beaten track, an unfinished canvas which appeared in the Paris sale and was then sold over again in New York, going into the possession of an American artist. It was a racing scene in which a thrown jockey lay with a deadly pallor upon his face while the field thundered over

him. It was an accident, pure and simple, that the artist portrayed; not drama thought out. It is one of the delightfulest paradoxes that this denizen of the theatre, who was forever looking at the stage, depicting the movement of the ballet, studying singers across the footlights, painting "Miss Lola" as she hung from the ceiling of the circus, clinging to the cord's end by her teeth, never brought into his art the faintest trace of theatricality. In the theatre and out of it he looked at life from a point of view sublimely disinterested.

It is hard to name the first and most lastingly significant landmark in the career of Degas, for the position is disputed by several works of outstanding beauty. He painted, for example, as far back as 1865, that fascinating medley of portraiture and flower-painting which is known as "La Femme aux Chrysanthèmes." Two years later came "La Femme aux Mains Jointes," now in the Gardner collection, which is as brilliant as a Velasquez in its handling of blacks. From 1872 dates the wonderful "Ballet de 'Robert le Diable,'" with which the English are doubtless well content as an illustration of Degas at his best when they see it in the Victoria and Albert Museum. All three of these paintings show Degas at his best, a young but puissant master. Yet for my own part, if I had to choose one of the earlier paintings as constituting a kind of canon of Degas, I would choose "Le Bureau de Coton." He painted it at New

Orleans in 1873, when he spent some long months on an uncle's plantation in the vicinity. As an artist he was never more triumphantly on the crest of the wave than in this picture. It is twenty-five years since I saw it, in the Paris Exposition of 1900, but my vision of it has never lost its clear outlines. Some time every day, through the weeks that I spent in the galleries, I would go and, with unchanging joy, fairly memorize the perfectly balanced design, the limpid tones, and the matchless drawing — the everlasting truth and beauty of the thing. In it you have, as it seems to me, Degas *in excelsis*, the master who observes life with absolute fidelity and lifts it to a higher power through the distinction of his technic. M. Henri Rivière, the latest editor of his drawings, calls him *un grand styliste*. The phrase exactly fits the painter of "Le Bureau de Coton," which makes him the peer of the old masters he so humbly and so steadfastly followed. Yet with this very thought there come intimations of certain differences betwixt him and them.

They turn upon the matter of imagination, which, for the present purpose, I conceive not as implying invention, not as promoting adventures in design, but as a transforming element, one enriching the thing seen even beyond the enrichment of technic. To make the point immediately concrete I would compare "Le Pédicure" by Degas, painted in the same year as "Le Bureau de Coton," with Rem-

brandt's "Old Woman Cutting Her Nails." Both subjects are disgusting, but when you look at Rembrandt's picture disgust is swallowed up in the emotion which only majestic beauty can evoke. With massy form and imposing drapery, with heroic contours and with grand light and shade, with rich color, but, above all, with the indescribable play of imaginative power, the artist lends to his commonplace figure the interest and the elevation of a Greek marble. When Degas painted "Le Pédicure" he took what was commonplace and left it utterly as he found it. The distinction indicated here is felt wherever you approach his work. He had, I suppose, a certain amount of human sympathy. You feel it especially in those studies he made of laundresses and other obscure toilers whose unlovely bodies are shaped into even greater unloveliness by grinding hardship. Yet it might easily be possible to deduce from these grimy documents a greater degree of sensibility than Degas actually had. There are some lines in "The Strayed Reveller" which irresistibly come back to me:

"The Gods are happy.
They turn on all sides
Their shining eyes,
And see below them
The earth and men.

. . . . . .

These things, Ulysses,
The wise bards also

Behold and sing,
But oh, what labour!
O prince, what pain!

They too can see
Tiresias; — but the Gods,
Who give them vision,
Added this law:

That they should bear too
His groping blindness,
His dark foreboding,
His scorn'd white hairs;
Bear Hera's anger
Through a life lengthen'd
To seven ages."

Degas emphatically was not one of "the wise bards." What of it? Does this make him any the less the master? Hardly, and the reader may be sure that I have not cited the foregoing fragment with any idea of its sanctioning a disparaging classification of his art. I cite it simply as an aid to characterization. Arnold so beautifully puts his finger upon what was left out of the painter's cosmos. For him rather the happy spectatorship of Olympus. He did not suffer as he watched his jockeys, dancers, café singers, milliners, and all the other passers-by in Parisian life. He did not share their hopes and sorrows — or even wonder if they had any. They were to him merely so many problems in form and movement, and where his happiness came in was in his

development of the solution of those problems through the language of line.

There lies the key to the beauty that is in him. His line is one of the most beautiful and one of the most magical in the whole history of European draftsmanship. It is in his line that he stands beside Leonardo or Dürer, Michael Angelo or Rembrandt; it is in his line that he is worthy of the Ingres whose example he cherished. He drew it on paper as he painted it on canvas — firmly, flowingly, with the truthfulness of a surgeon exercising his scalpel, with tremendous personal force and with that last creative impulse which endues line with beauty and with style. One can imagine the replies of divers great artists, asked at the gates of the Elysian Fields for their passports to immortality. One can hear Raphael: "I designed." Or Tintoretto: "I dramatized." Or Leonardo: "I evoked beauty." Or Velasquez, using the words that Whistler wrote for him: "I dipped my brush in light and air and caused my people to stand upon their legs." And when it came the turn of Degas, he would say, simply and proudly: "I drew."

II

AS A MAN

Degas had always what his countrymen call "a good press." He was wont to speak scornfully of others, which is perhaps one reason why others were

FIGURE FROM "THE DUO"

FROM THE DRAWING BY DEGAS

wont to speak well of him. Nevertheless, there were few commentators who were able to break through the barriers with which he surrounded himself, and, though much has been written about the artist, little has been written about the man. Even such glimpses of him as George Moore, for example, has given us have been colored by the writer's consciousness of the purely artistic elements in his subject. It is not so in the case of the model, Pauline, whose impressions were communicated to Alice Michel and by her contributed to the *Mercure de France*. When she posed for Degas in the closing years of his life she knew perfectly well that she was posing for a genius; but she knew also that her employer was a weary, half-blind, pathetic old man, and it is the merely human side of him that passed into her recollections. I am not sure but that they do more to make us acquainted with his personality than is done by any of the high erected tributes that have been paid to him by oracles of much greater pretenses.

It was in the old house at 37 Rue Victor-Massé that Pauline posed for the master. "Nom de Dieu! You pose badly to-day!" is the first saying she quotes from him, but it is evident that she was, on the whole, a satisfactory model, and she had the run of the studio so long that her descriptions are unmistakably exact. She pictures a vast, sombre, and, indeed, rather unsympathetic room. It held many armoires, tables, easels, tabourets, screens, and so

on, but there was never a bibelot or a hanging to relieve the monotony of the dull brown walls. A single painting, unfinished, one of his dancing scenes, gave rather grudging indication of the artistic riches piled within reach, but invisible in portfolios or otherwise hidden. A curious note is supplied by the bathtub lying among the furniture. The toilet subjects with which Degas so often dealt were not always, after all, of the "keyhole" origin which has been assigned to them. Pictures which have seemed like so many invasions of privacy were really painted in the studio, with the aid of the bathtub aforesaid. Pauline was made pretty uncomfortable by the dust lying thick over everything. Zoë, the old housekeeper, had permission to light the fire and give a touch of the broom to a limited area extending from the small stove. Otherwise she was forbidden to disturb the accumulated dirt of years. There was no clean, tidy spot on which the model might deposit her clothes, and when her work was ended she was dismissed to a dark, cold, and dirty corner which was all that *le vieux maniaque* allowed his models for a dressing-room. He deplored the use of a clothes-brush, and was irritated if Pauline wished to wash her hands. It was ridiculous, he thought, to be always dabbling in the water. Zoë is sympathetic but helpless. She has been with the master for twenty years, and yet, she asks Pauline, with tears in her voice, had the model noticed how Degas had behaved toward her that morning when

the fire had been slow? And he has not wanted to give up the day's allowance of five francs for the larder. That is all she gets to feed him, herself, and her niece. A chicken sent in by one of his friends has seemed to him to cover the situation this time. Yet for the purchase of paintings or drawings he can always find the money!

Pauline's first memories are of an irritable, taciturn old man, shaking his white hairs in vexation; his large nostrils breathing fury; the mouth obstinately closed; the chin expressive of a hard will. He wears a long gray blouse, in which he takes rapid strides. His movements are habitually brusque. Absorbed in the figurine he is modelling — it is altogether as a sculptor that Pauline knew him — he is exasperated with the model when, as one suspects, the clay proves intractable. "You pose so badly that you will make me die of rage!" But the very next day all is changed. He is still at breakfast when Pauline comes, in a room almost as bleak as the studio. Zoë is reading him an article from *La Libre Parole* while he eats. "Ta-ta-ta-ta!" he suddenly cries, in a passion. "Mon Dieu, Zoë, you read badly!" and he bids her stop. But Pauline notices that his expression this morning is generally serene, and she detects a certain sweetness in his eyes. They talk of homely things. Degas explains that Zoë has been shortening the sleeves of a jacket he has bought in the Place Clichy for eighteen francs. Was that expensive?

Pauline reassures him. Zoë seizes the moment to remind him that the time has come for him to go to the Bon Marché and buy some shirts and socks. He pretends not to hear and starts for the studio, but presently gives Zoë ten francs. "Five for Pauline," he says, "and five for food. Still, yesterday there was the chicken sent in by a friend." In the studio he is querulous about his ill-health, and impatient of Zoë, who is forever urging him to buy linen. Hasn't he just bought that jacket in the Place Clichy? To be told that Zoë is economical and never wants him to buy useless things is not really consoling. He will wait till the last minute to do his shopping, just the same. Then, when he does it, there will be such a mob of women! Why not send Zoë? Oh, well, he likes better to go himself. It occupies an afternoon. He marvels at the emotions of women in the shops. Is Pauline like that? No, she has no time for shopping, though she must soon hunt up a bit of silk for her mother's birthday. Degas pooh-poohs the silk idea. When he seeks gifts for his sister and her daughters he finds something more useful.

The talk drifts to his afternoon promenades. They are an old habit. He takes the tram from the Place Pigalle to the Porte de Vincennes and strolls for a while on the fortifications. Then another tram and another walk and he is home. He goes to Montrouge and Auteuil. He is especially fond of Montmartre, for he knows all the streets there and does not need

to ask his way. But it hardly matters where he goes, with his poor eyes. Pauline warns him to be prudent, reminding him of the taxis and other dangers of the highway. Yes. He knows. Zoë is always warning him, and is in terror if he is late in returning. But he can't stay eternally at home. He needs the air. She tells him he moves as swiftly as a rabbit. She has seen him near the Moulin Rouge, and he went up the Rue Lepic too quickly for her to overtake him. He laughs. "Yes, I still have good legs." He does not like to go out at night. The streets are too badly lighted. He rarely accepts an invitation to dinner. Besides, it would keep him up too late. Pauline reminds him that he goes to bed at nine. He sighs, and then breaks out in rebellion against his semi-blindness. It is hideous not to see clearly. For years he has had to renounce drawing and painting, and has had to content himself with sculpture. If his sight goes on failing he will have to abandon even that. Then, what will he do with his days? He will die of ennui and disgust. What has he done that he should be thus tortured? All his life has been consecrated to his work. Never has he sought honors or riches. He appeals to high heaven to spare him the torment of going blind. His model tries to comfort him. He is not going blind. He is fatigued, and the day is cold. Finer days will make him better. Does Pauline think so? The thought cheers him. She reiterates it. The doctors would tell him the same

thing. He is doing very well for a man of seventy-six. He works every day, even on Sundays and holidays. Younger artists do not work so hard. He has a good appetite and a good digestion; he sleeps well and has no rheumatism like his old friend the collector, Rouart. He laughs and goes to work.

Precious, inspiring, rejuvenating work! Degas sings a fragment from "Don Giovanni" as his fingers fly; sings in a voice which Pauline finds "sweet and expressive," and he translates the text for his listener. He knows the Italian operas by heart, and some days passes the whole morning singing them over his clay, pausing to cry out: "Is not this delicious?" He wanders off into fantastic monologues and sometimes forgets himself, using words which are enough, Pauline tells him, to make a trooper blush. He apologizes for offending her "chaste ears." He knows not what he is saying when he is at work. She asks for a rest from the difficult pose and for the air he has just been singing. It is the air of a minuet, and as he sings they face one another in the movement of the dance. He grows happy. The minuet finished he seizes her hand and swings her in a *ronde*, singing the while an old song. A little giddy at the end of it, he subsides upon a lounge and asks: "What is prettier or more gracious than these old French *rondes?*" Zoë comes in with a bowl of tisane. He drinks it with laughter and chuckles over the idea of himself as a Don Juan. Aside from his lapses into bad language his conduct

with his models is impeccable, but he gleefully pleads with Pauline to see that when she poses in other studios she gives him a sinister reputation.

To his gayety on one day succeeds gloom on the next. He thinks always of death. Day or night the dread of it is before his eyes. How sad it is to be old, he cries. How lucky for Pauline to be only twenty-five. She protests against his repinings. She reminds him to look at Harpignies, who is ninety. Whether the spectacle encourages him or not, he is willing to change the subject. He tells Pauline that he loves her name, and goes on to speak of "Edgard," his own. "When I was born, in 1834," he says, "the epoch was one for romantic names, and my parents followed the fashion. My grand-parents were old émigrés, who left Paris under the Revolution for Naples. They became bankers there. I still have kinsfolk in that region." Musing over these relations he recalls how he was often in the south when he was young, speaks of travelling with Gustave Moreau, but now, alas! he does not see well enough for such journeys. He recalls his sojourn in America, when he spent long months on his uncle's plantation. Connoisseurs of his work know this period as it is commemorated in one of the most brilliant of his earlier pictures, the famous "Bureau de Coton." Degas says nothing of this. He brings back, instead, the joyous moment in which he had speech with a French workman on the New Orleans docks. In it he caught the Parisian

argot, which he was missing, and it brought tears to his eyes. Pauline angles for memories of more important people. He smiles at her curiosity, which he easily detects, girding at her "little elephant feet." Degas turns the tables and wants to know about M. Blondin, for whom Pauline also poses. She speaks of that gentleman's indulging in *blague*, "like all artists," and as he scornfully repeats that phrase, he discourses on artists and their models. They both behave better than the world thinks. He speaks well of models and of the ballet dancers who have so often posed for him. Incidentally, he remarks that he has been several times to call for news of one of the dancers, Yvonne, who has been down with typhoid. One senses the kindly, generous feeling in the old man's heart.

If he grumbles at others, he grumbles at himself. Pauline notes his chagrin when he finds that one of his figurines is in bad shape, and realizes that he might have made it securer if he had not been too solicitous of the cost of plasteline. But his bitterest outbursts are against the meretricious folk in art. How about M. Blondin? Is he ambitious? Has he any medals? On learning that the poor man has indeed been recompensed in the exhibitions, Degas is furious. "Hein! They are ridiculous with their medals. These men do not speak as we do of such a thing happening in such a year. No, they say, 'The year when I had my medal, or my *premier prix*, or my violet ribbon,' as

women say, 'The year when I had my beautiful *robe de velours*.' And to think that even my friends, my best friends, run after honors and distinctions; talk of salons and exhibitions. A true artist does not do these things. If he really has talent he can show his works, no matter where, even in the shop of a shoemaker, and he will surely find persons to notice and appreciate him." Pauline points out that he also has exhibited. She has read about him in a brochure by Huysmans. This is the signal for a terrific gust of contempt. "Huysmans? He is a —— What has he to do with painting? He knows nothing. Good heavens! In what an epoch we are living, when models come to you to speak of art, of painting, of literature, as if all they had to know was how to read and write. People were happier without all this useless instruction. Zoë has two brothers, one a butcher and the other a wagoner. They neither read nor write, and this is not bad for them. To-day everything is vulgarized — education, and even art. What a criminal folly to talk of 'popular art'! As if artists themselves had not enough labor to apprehend art. But it all comes from these modern ideas of equality! What infamy to speak of equality! There will always be the rich and the poor. Formerly each one stayed in his place and dressed according to his condition. To-day the obscurest grocer's boy must read his newspaper and dress like a gentleman. What an infamous century!"

Pauline knew better than to try to answer this tirade. She went on posing, in a glacial silence. The door bell rang and Degas straightened up with his surliest expression. As he opened the door there drifted in to Pauline's attentive ear a dulcet "*Bonjour, cher Maître.*" In an instant came the reply, "There is no '*cher Maître*' here," and the door went to with a bang. In a fury Degas goes back to work, muttering: "It is one of those —— art critics." The unfortunate visitor was one who knew not the habit of his *cher Maître*, which was to work undisturbed in the morning. Even his closest intimates were unwelcome then. Only at meals or in the afternoons would he see anybody. Once in Pauline's experience a round, lively, white-haired little gentleman was received in the morning and spent a long time talking. He waved his arm at the sole picture exposed, the dancing subject we have cited, and offered to buy it. "You can see that it is not finished," growled Degas. "But it is very well as it is," retorted the other. "Let me have it." The old artist, who had been amiable enough up to this, took on a crusty tone. "You know nothing," he replied, and opened the door wide for his tactless guest to depart.

Where is the searcher after beauty in this atmosphere of dust, work, and ill-temper? Pauline speaks of his always giving her difficult poses. He had an aversion, as it seemed to her, to all gracious movement. But his cult for what we may call severity

never blinded him to the charm of pure nature. He was enraged if he caught Pauline using rouge. "When one is young and fresh there is no need for such fripperies. *Restez donc naturelle.*" She asked him why, then, he loved to draw his themes from the theatre, where there is so much that is factitious, but to this she got no answer. There are no nuances of his artistic ideal emerging from the dialogue. One is made aware chiefly of just his passion for art, for work. Artistic activity was essential to him. He worked on Christmas Day. "How could I pass the morning otherwise? God will forgive me for neglecting my Christian devotions for my work." In his absorption he was merciless to his models. There was one of them, Suzon, who had the hardihood to be a quarter of an hour late for her morning's work. Degas dismissed her the moment she turned up, giving her the five francs due for the sitting, but forbidding her ever to return. His own hours were as adamant. Forain found this out when Degas once came to dine with him. The dinner was for nine o'clock. This was too late for Degas, who said so, and sat down to his soup alone at eight. He never dined there again. He complained, by the way, that Forain called him "M. Degaz."

Sensitive, brusque, irascible, and, perhaps, capricious, Père Degas was chancy company. There came a time when illness interrupted his modelling and Pauline did not see him for months. Then, when she

sought him out, she found that the house in the Rue Victor-Massé in which he had lived for twenty-five years had been marked for demolition, to make way for a modern building, and she followed Degas to new quarters in the Boulevard de Clichy. Zoë received her with joy and took her at once to the master, who was at table. He lifted his head and asked Pauline briefly what she wished. She had only called to ask after his health, she explained. "Yes," said he. "Zoë, bring me my tea. *Bonjour*, Pauline." That was his farewell, and in its curtness it would seem to deny to her reminiscences the seal of anything like friendship. But they can do without it. They serve, nevertheless, as I have said, to initiate us into the presence of the old man, to make us realize a little what he was like — harsh and gay, variable but, somehow, "all of a piece." He is exasperating, touching, and, somehow, not unlovable. Through the play of his saturnine humor you catch the natural man and see what it is good to see — how even to Pauline, who took him simply as a human being, he was the great artist. Does she not make plain his passion for his work? Month after month she posed for him, while he wrestled with the clay and fashioned the little statuettes which were alone left to him in art. What were they like? He was not an expert in the manipulation of the sculptor's material. The figurines over which he labored with so much devotion would crumble or go away. But a man of his

gifts could not winnow the wind. Something was certain to come forth from all that struggle.

III

AS A SCULPTOR

From the moment that I read Pauline's account of her experiences as a model for some of the figurines sculptured by Degas, I tried to get on their track. Inquiry made of M. Durand-Ruel brought me this letter:

June 7, 1919.

My Dear Mr. Cortissoz:

It is quite true that Degas has spent a good deal of time, not only in the later years of his life, but for the past fifty years, in modelling in clay. Thus, as far as I can remember — that is to say, perhaps forty years — whenever I called on Degas I was almost as sure to find him modelling in clay as painting. He must have made an enormous number of clay or wax figures. But as he never took care of them — he never put them in bronze —they always fell to pieces after a few years, and for that reason it is only the later ones that now exist.

When I made the inventory of Degas's possessions I found about one hundred and fifty pieces scattered over his three floors in every possible place. Most of them were in pieces, some almost reduced to dust. We put apart all those that we thought might be seen, which was about one hundred, and we made an inventory of them. Out of these, thirty are about valueless; thirty badly broken up and very sketchy; the remaining thirty are quite fine. They can be cast in bronze. They have all been intrusted to the care of the sculptor Bartholomé, who was an intimate friend of Degas, and in the near future the work

will be started by the founder Hebrard, who will reproduce them in *cire perdue.*

It is understood that twenty-five sets of each statuette will be made. The first set will be given to the Louvre. The other sets will be sold.

Yours sincerely,
J. DURAND-RUEL.

It was possible for me to get some idea of what the figurines were like at the time this letter was written, studying a sheaf of photographs, but I had to wait two years and more for a view of the sculptures themselves. A set, the first one to reach this country, was placed on exhibition at the Grolier Club. It made a group of seventy-two bronzes, magnificently illustrating the master's work in the round.

In everything that he did he was an insatiable interrogator of form and movement. Modelling these statuettes, he drew, if anything, closer to the expression of his ideas on these subjects than he could with the brush. What were his ideas? Were they those of a creative artist or those of a craftsman for whom, in Gautier's phrase, the visible world existed? Just after his death, when the novelty of the figurines was in the air, so to say, M. Paul Gsell rose up in "La Renaissance" to pronounce Degas *une statuaire de génie.* The phrase seems just, if its implications are not carried too far. That Degas had genius it would be idle to deny, but thinking of genius in sculpture one assumes an element that would seem to be in-

Dancers

FROM THE BRONZES BY DEGAS

separable from it, the element of design. The Degas bronzes, on the other hand, are the fruits not of invention but of patient observation. When they possess the quality of composition, which is not infrequent, it would appear to be accidental rather than intentional. You would say that one of his poised dancers had the charm of a figurine by Clodion until you began to ponder it more closely and saw that the sophisticated balance of the eighteenth century was not there. There is, in its place, the artless vitality of the thing seen, the passage from life arrested and restated with the touch of the pitiless realist.

Degas carried over into these plastic studies of his something of the dry psychology of his pictorial work. He is the inquisitive analyst pursuing some recondite movement of form and recording it for its own sake, not the inventive devotee of beauty weaving a plastic pattern of loveliness. Because there are both grace and rhythm in many of the bronzes one may be momentarily inclined to see in them the disciple of Ingres. But the impression is superficial and passes. What remains is the point of view of a man for whom a gesture, a contour, was by itself exciting, a truth interesting because it was the truth, rooted in life, not because it had any subjective envelopment. Looking at the photographs mentioned above, I recalled the figurines of Tanagra, wondering if anything of their mood had ever visited Degas. Looking

at the bronzes, I felt that the spirit of Tanagra was beside the point. I was not sorry.

Degas is twice as compelling because there is nothing of tradition in his sculpture, but just the actuality to which his whole genius was dedicated. And being a genius he reached a beauty of his own. The little torso he modelled is a good illustration. There hangs about it the sensuous glamour of the antique. Only it remains, like all the other pieces, intensely modern, intensely expressive of that analytic passion to which I have referred. It is so, too, with the studies of horses. In them the vivid, tangible note of the race-course seems fused with a large dignity that could only have been added to the bronze by an artist with the gift of style. That is the final touch, enriching the whole varied group of nudes, dancers, and animals. You savor the artist's truth, his energy, his skill, but above all you savor his style, his distinction of line, his personal touch in the modulation of surface. The new page that is unfolded in the history of his art is absolutely "of a piece" with the rest; it raises the stuff of life to a higher power through the play of that magic which lies simply in great, individualized technic.

IV

AS A COLLECTOR

I have spoken on another page of the obscurity in which the solitary life of Degas was plunged. For years his door was sealed to all save a few intimates, and, once within, not even his old friends could feel that they were made really free of all his possessions. In perennial dust and gloom, as Mr. Moore has told us, the vast canvases of his youth were piled up in formidable barricades, and though many works from other hands were visible on the walls no visitor ever came away with a precise and comprehensive knowledge of just what the old, secretive apartment contained. All that was generally known was that Degas had accumulated a lot of fine things, among which the productions of Ingres were conspicuous. The rest was legend. For art lovers throughout the world, fascinated by his own works and doubly interested in the question of his taste because it had its mysterious aspects, he became a figure not unlike one of Balzac's *collectionneurs* — shadowy, reticent, a little bizarre, and, in the matter of furnishing surprises, presumably capable of anything. It is not too much to say that the public exhibition of no collection of our time has been awaited with a tithe of the curiosity excited when the "*Collection particulière E. Degas*" was sold in 1918 and 1919. A bundle of photographs is not, ordinarily, the most eloquent thing

in the world, but the one which lifted for me the curtain hung over a great artist's studio for a lifetime was fairly thrilling. With its aid, reinforced by the scant biographical data available, I could reconstruct something of the artist's inner life and get that much closer to the secret of his genius.

The small number of old masters in the list — an early copy after Cuyp, an eighteenth-century French portrait, a typically elegant Perronneau, a sketch by Tiepolo, and a couple of pictures of saints by El Greco — is in no wise to be misunderstood. For his old masters Degas naturally went to the museums. He prospered exceedingly, but he was never rich enough to make for himself another Louvre. How he haunted that institution and the Italian galleries we know. In his earlier period he was all for the old masters and the world well lost. It is said that he spent a year copying Poussin's "Rape of the Sabines," and according to George Moore the copy is as fine as the original. There are stories, too, of his copying Clouet and Holbein, and, whether he studied Ghirlandajo for the same purpose or not, it is known that he sat reverently at the feet of that Renaissance Florentine. M. Lemoisne cites also a copy from Sir Thomas Lawrence, an odd type to be found in this gallery. What was it that he sought among the Primitives? The answer is disclosed the more luminously as we postpone it to the hour of his *éclosion* as an artist.

It is tempting to the students of Degas, familiar with the works characteristic of the greater part of his life, to see him as so essentially allied to the modern, impressionistic group as to have, otherwise, no antecedents. The influence of Ingres is often reckoned with, by commentators on him, as though it were a deliberately adopted elixir, something poured out of a bottle. As a matter of fact, the passion for sound drawing was in his blood. It was that that drew him to the Primitives. His initiation into the circle of Ingres would appear to have dated from his youth. Degas was born in 1834. He was old enough when he frequented the house of Mme. Valpinçon, the master's friend, to profit by his few encounters there with the august potentate. Ingres lived on until 1867. Doubtless before the end Degas had precept as well as example to make the *ménage* Valpinçon memorable to him, counsels for the confirmation of which he had only to turn to the pictures given to his hostess by her friend. At any rate, it puts no strain upon the imagination to figure him as making, almost as though under the eye of Ingres, the famous "Etude pour Semiramis," which Ingres himself would not have disdained. To think of Degas as exclusively the painter of jockeys, ballet girls, and laundresses is to forget the picture on which he labored so devotedly in 1861, his "Semiramis Building the Walls of Babylon." That mood of his, we say, long ago went down the wind. It stayed with him, to tell the truth,

in a sense, down to the day he died. For it was not an archæological mood. It was the mood for form, for contours finely drawn, for draperies handled as so much sheer linear beauty. It was the mood of Ingres. Here I resume my bundle of photographs and look at the list.

Montauban itself could hardly furnish forth a purer light on the subject. The collection there is more voluminous, of course, but it contains no finer things than the works in the Degas collection. There was, to begin with, a group of the full-dress portraits, a "Monsieur de Norvins," which seemed almost as impressive as the "Bertin" in the Louvre; a "Marquis de Pastoret," making for it a fit companion, and, to complete the trio, an unmistakably superb portrait of a lady, this one "Madame Leblanc." Evidently in painted portraiture Degas contrived to get a full and authoritative representation of his master; in the matter of subject pictures he was no less fortunate, acquiring a version of the "Roger délivrant Angelique," as well as half a dozen other mythological or historical studies, and then, having formed a sufficient gallery of the paintings, he proceeded fairly to luxuriate in the drawings. The titles fill a couple of pages in the list, pointing to a veritable mine of glorious draftsmanship, and the photographs more than confirmed this impression. He missed no aspect of the great artist's genius.

A study for the "Roger" gave his measure in the

sphere of pictorial invention; there were portraits, and dozens of the incomparable nudes, including one gem-like study for "The Grand Odalisque." I could dilate upon them all, one by one. But I turn rather to their broad significance, visualizing Degas throughout the years of his maturity, coming home to that quiet studio of his to paint a ballet girl — but painting under the influence of these drawings, drinking in their inspiration day by day, living constantly in the spirit of the classicist he adored. At the bottom of his work you find Ingres, which is to say not the imitation of a style but the application of a principle. It is an instance of the thinking artist, that always rare type, the man whose hand is fed by his brain, who practises his own method, but is steadily open to other impressions, allowing them to fertilize his genius without governing it. There are no contradictions in the life of such an artist. He does not "dislike" one master because he "likes" another. All is fish that comes to his net.

But you find a pretty clearly defined catch when you look into the net of an artist like Degas. After Ingres he was enthusiastic for Delacroix, of all men. I say "of all men" because the antithesis between Ingres and Delacroix is so strong. Each fairly hated what the other did. Just why Degas, loving Ingres, loved also his romantic rival is, I confess, a little difficult to surmise, even with the evidence before me. The evidence, in fact, was so mixed. The early por-

trait, "Baron de Schwitzer," supplied something in the nature of a clue. It was a simple, beautifully drawn thing. Ingres would have praised it — if he could have praised anything by Delacroix. The rest was all pure romanticism — Delacroix the disciple of Rubens, Delacroix the Orientalist, Delacroix the painter of battle scenes, of hunting episodes, of religious subjects à la Titian. There were drawings, as in the Ingres contingent, but one suspects it was the colorist in Delacroix that won Degas. At all events, he was in this collection, as in the days when the two men were living, the rival of Ingres. They were the twin pillars bearing the arch, as it were, of that æsthetic fabric which Degas reared in his home, under which he dreamed his dreams and did his work. No other individual loomed quite so large in the list. But just one came very near to doing so. This was Manet. There was a curious leap, if I may so define it, from period to period in the Degas collection. One was aware in the first place, as I have indicated, of the pervasive influences of Ingres and Delacroix. Then a silence befell. It was the Salon and all its works being haughtily ignored.

Was he attracted at that juncture by the Barbizon men? Yes, by Corot. There were seven of that master's works in the collection, evidently in more than one of his manners. The photograph gave an enchanting account of an early mountain scene done in the Morvan. There were others, like "Le Pont de

Limy," which seemed even in a photograph to be made of the pure gold of Corot. Moore has a note that is appropriate here, a note on Degas at a Bougival dinner, looking at some large trees massed in shadow. "How beautiful they would be," he said, "if Corot had painted them." There was one Rousseau, and I observed a couple of studies by Millet. There was nothing of Dupré, of Diaz, of Daubigny, as there was nothing, on the purely romantic side, of Decamps or Géricault. Troyon, obviously, was likewise absent. One cannot see Degas ecstatic before a painted cow. Barbizon, in short, as Barbizon, and "1830" as a battle cry, it is plain, meant nothing to Degas. He was bored by "schools," "movements," and I know nothing more characteristic of him. Let me revert to that leap to which I have just alluded. Barring his pause upon the beauty of Corot, it took him straight to the camp of the impressionists, to Manet and the rest.

The Manets included a number of works that were "important," as the jargon of criticism has it, stunning finished pictures like the "Indienne Fumant," or the half-humorous "Portrait of M. Brun." masterly still-lifes like the "Jambon" and the "Poire" (which in the photograph had the air of a miracle), and so on through a group of paintings, studies, and pastels, twenty pieces in all. There were in this little collection some items of quite extraordinary interest, a strange, fragmentary version of "The Execution of

Maximilian," a portrait of Berthe Morisot that was like a sudden flashlight effect thrown upon a screen. We have heard from Moore and others of the deep-rooted affection Degas had for Manet. These pictures seemed echoes of it. Some, possibly all of them, may have been purchased, but from their quality one took them to have been fraternal gifts or exchanges. They had the character of personal souvenirs. As in the case of Corot, I felt in the presence of the essential artist. No one else in the Impressionistic *cénacle* appeared to have had anything like the same hold upon Degas. Pissarro turned up with four or five landscapes, Sisley with one, and there were traces of Caillebotte and John Lewis Brown. By Berthe Morisot there was a good sketch, and by the American impressionist, Mary Cassatt, there were no fewer than four pictures. Boudin was present in a couple of sky studies and a water-color, and Renoir in a good head of a woman. Of Claude Monet there was no sign at all. Had they some personal cause of disagreement, or did Degas, painting ballet girls over and over again, in infinite variety, rebel against the somewhat monotonous tendency in his contemporary's similar devotion to haystacks and cathedrals? The omission was indubitably a little odd.

He took with a good will the step from impressionism to post-impressionism. One of his Gauguins was a curious memento of the point of contact be-

tween the two, a copy of Manet's "Olympia," which in the photograph would easily pass for an original study. He had at least ten of Gauguin's paintings, most of them relics of the painter's sojourn in Tahiti. Cézanne was almost as fully represented, with portraits, figure subjects, and still life, and Van Gogh also had his modest place, being given three numbers in the catalogue. Turning over the photographs and recalling the good old rule that the king can do no wrong, I realized that I ought to be deeply impressed by the inclusion of these things in the collection of Degas. In some pious quarters, I know, it could only be taken as a kind of pontifical ratification, and I am quite sure that the episode served in those quarters to give the post-impressionist hypothesis a new lease of life. For my own part I could only look upon this small section in the mass as an incongruous pendant, difficult to reconcile — even for the "thinking artist" to whom I have referred — with the atmosphere and principles otherwise disclosed. The "going," so to say, was easier in passing to the remaining pieces in the list, the paintings by Daumier, Puvis, and Legros, the dozen drawings by Forain — one of the master's peculiar admirations — and a few oddments by Jeanniot, Guillaumin, Ricard, Bartholomé (the sculptor), and the portrait painter of the Second Empire, Heim. There was also a single work of German origin, an example of the great draftsman, Menzel.

These things fitted into the picture, the picture of a

gallery and a mind. It is an ancient axiom that a man is known by the company he keeps. An artist is certainly known by his predilections among other artists. That is why I found so lively an interest in a bundle of insensate photographs. In the memories they awoke of Ingres and Delacroix, Manet and Corot, Daumier and Forain, they illuminated and explained Degas. We know him better, and the better understand his own work, in knowing the masters with whom he most cared to live.

XVII

Monet

XVII

MONET

When despatches from France brought the news that Claude Monet in his eighty-third year had undergone an operation for cataract, the natural thing to do was to turn to M. Joseph Durand-Ruel for some light on the subject. Like his father before him, he is close to everything that relates to impressionism, and, as usual, he had received from Paris some interesting communications. "Yesterday," wrote a member of his family, "we went to Giverny to pay a visit to Claude Monet, who interrupted his game of backgammon with Clemenceau to greet us most kindly. He was looking wonderful, with his plaited frills and his vest painted by Mme. Albert André. His eyes seemed to be all right, but he will undergo his second operation shortly." Later M. Georges Durand-Ruel wrote: "I received yesterday a visit from Michel Monet. Monet underwent his second operation last Wednesday at a clinic at Neuilly. The operation itself was not much, and he stood it very well, but for the following three days he was prescribed complete immobility; he was given no solid food, but was fed only on liquids. He was rather exasperated but is now calm, and Michel Monet told

me I could pay him a visit. He will stay a few days longer in the clinic before he returns to Giverny. The cataract of the other eye is very advanced; the surgeon says he could make the operation now, but he prefers to wait until next year, when Monet has entirely recovered from the operation." In still another note the writer says: "I have just come back from Monet's clinic. I saw him only a short time, having been asked not to stay long. Mme. Jean Monet told me that the night following the operation had been bad. He had been asked to be quiet, but was very nervous and exasperated." A few days later he was on his feet again and planning for an early return to his beloved Giverny.

These details, surely of interest to every admirer of the great painter, revived in me a precious memory of Claude Monet some twenty-odd years ago. I saw him then at Giverny, and in the mind's eye I see again as though it were yesterday that unique presence, those searching eyes, and a curious immaculateness. There was about the burly, bearded figure something which I can only describe as the sweetness and freshness of youth. We sat and talked in the studio, looking over a great collection of impressions that Monet had just painted on the Thames, and, apropos, I shall never forget the serene finality with which he told me that numbers of them were doomed to destruction, because they did not satisfy him. Afterward we joined the family around a table

under the trees and went on talking about pictures while Madame Monet knitted. He was interested to hear about impressionism in the United States. But most vividly of all do I recall the Monet who presently dropped artistic subjects and took me for a stroll through his incomparable domain. Part of it was a garden full of flowers. Part of it was that little body of water, an arm of the Epte, thickly framed by trees, where lilies floated and where the Master painted those exquisite pictures known as "Les Paysages d'Eau," or "Les Nymphéas." Monet's conversation then revealed him for what he has always been, a loving interpreter of Nature, the man happier in her companionship than amid any of the attractions of urban life. I wonder if this had not had something to do with the freshness, the immaculateness to which I have referred. I know that there was something about Monet, something indescribably wholesome and fine, suggestive of a spiritual alliance between him and the clean earth. This impression is ratified as I turn the pages of the book about him published by his old friend, Gustave Geffroy.

Geffroy begins, characteristically enough in the case of a French artist, with allusions to Monet's respect for tradition and paints him as out of humor with his own work when he thinks of the achievements of the past. "All the eulogies which I have received," he said one day, "seem out of proportion when I remember the masters of painting, Titian,

Veronese, Rubens, Velasquez, Rembrandt, whose genius is incontestable. After their works what are ours, what are mine?" Being a man of genius himself, his admirations take a wide range. In the *salle* of the eighteenth century, at the Louvre, Clemenceau asked him what picture there he would choose. Watteau's "Embarkation for Cythera," Monet told him. His reverence for the old masters has been unbounded. At Madrid he has stood before "Las Meninas" of Velasquez with his eyes full of tears. But in his appreciation of that very picture you have a clue to the secret of his own creative gift. He told Geffroy that what he especially admired in "Las Meninas" was the air bathing the figures. With admirable judgment his biographer makes the most of that clue. Monet was born in Paris on November 14, 1840 (the same day as Rodin, who was to become his lifelong friend), but as a young artist he received his initiation at Havre. There he began as a designer of caricatures, and in the shop to which he took them for sale he fell in with Boudin, whom Courbet called "the Raphael of the skies." When we find him again in Paris, his vocation well settled, it is with a feeling for light and air and truth which had unquestionably been clarified and fixed in him by Boudin.

M. Geffroy draws a charming picture of him as a young man in the capital, making friends among the brilliant Bohemians of the Brasserie des Martyrs, his ardors stimulated by the talk of Champfleury, Dur-

anty, Firmin Maillard, and a score of others destined for fame. Courbet, superb in a white waistcoat, would describe a visit to Ingres. Poets would declaim their verses. Castagnary would come there, and so would Alphonse Daudet. Decidedly the Brasserie was rich in enkindling personalities. Monet refers to some of them as "*mauvais sujets* like myself." He looks like anything save a *mauvais sujet* in the portrait of him painted at this time by Déodat de Severac. On the contrary, he appears an unusually grave youth of eighteen, with a lofty brow and an altogether serious aspect. In fact, he was nothing if not serious, as is shown by his letters to Boudin, full of judgmatic comment on the pictures in the Salon. He is highly appreciative, by the way, of Delacroix, Rousseau, Millet, and Daubigny. In the early sixties came his military service, but ill health terminated this after two years, and on his return from Africa, artistically the better for what he had seen there, he went once more to Havre, where he painted again with Boudin, and this time came also under the equally favorable influence of Jongkind. Coming back definitively to Paris around 1863, he formally entered the atelier of Gleyre. Whistler, the reader will recall, made a similar error. Monet found three young fellows of his own tendencies likewise bewildered by an incongruous master. They drew from the model. Gleyre criticised Monet's work one day. "It is not bad," said he, "but the breast is heavy, the shoulder too powerful, and the foot too

large." Timidly Monet replied that he had to draw that which he saw. "Praxiteles," Gleyre dryly told him, "took the best elements from a hundred imperfect models before he created a masterpiece. When one would do anything it is well to think of the antique." That night Monet talked it over with the three aforesaid, which is to say with Sisley, Renoir, and Bazille. "This place is unhealthy," he said, and after a fortnight more of vain struggle with an impossible philosophy they incontinently fled. It is not surprising that Monet's rebellion against Gleyre landed him forthwith in the arms of Courbet.

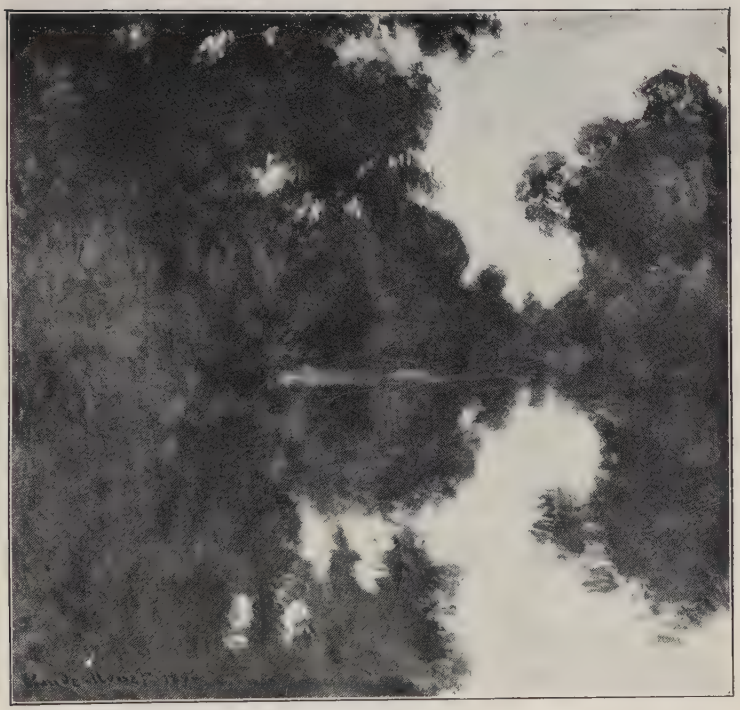
Courbet was very kind and encouraging to the young man, who, as he said, "painted something besides angels," giving him good advice and even lending him money when he was in difficulties. Some of Geffroy's pleasantest pages relate to this friendship. I gather that Monet fairly loved the old artist, with whom he spent some of the happiest days of his life painting around Havre. It was there that Courbet made him acquainted with the elder Dumas. Once, when they were to dine together, Courbet failed to appear, and Monet, seeking him out, found him asleep. Dumas was gayly astonished. "I have frequented kings," he cried, "and they have never kept me waiting!" One is always coming back to Havre with Monet, for that means coming back to the sea, an influence constant in the painter's life. He wanted always to be near it. "When I die," he once said, "I

would wish to be coffined in a buoy" — which would be to be rocked in the cradle of the deep with a vengeance. It is a singular thing, however, that while one of the earliest of his pictures is a shore scene painted at Havre in 1866, and while divers views in Paris come down from the same year, Monet's rôle at the outset was as much that of the figure painter as that of the landscape or marine artist. His first considerable paintings were undoubtedly "Le Déjeuner sur L'Herbe" and "La Dame à la Robe Verte," a full-length portrait of the painter's wife. Geffroy fixes between 1880 and 1883 that phase in the evolution of Monet which marks him most decisively as the salient master of impressionism. It is significant that this French critic, for many years the intimate of the master, should use the word "evolution." That is precisely the right one.

He seems to have abandoned figure painting in the seventies, and thenceforth his landscapes gained steadily in atmospheric refinement. Light, always light, that it is which proves more and more an element in the painter's palette — a thing as definitely controlled as the actual pigment. It is a little disappointing at first to observe that the biographer of Monet had little, if anything, to say about the scientific aspect, so called, of the impressionistic movement. But on reflection this circumstance only serves happily to indorse the view I have always maintained that impressionism has really had no

scientific aspect at all. Claude Monet is an artist — a great artist — and that, I venture to say, means that he has arrived at his delineations of nature through processes of direct observation, instinct, and experimentation. Somewhere in this book he is encountered declining to assume the functions of a teacher. There is not available anywhere, that I know of, a philosophy, a body of ideas, attributable to him. Simply, across the years he has beaten out a method, a mode, a style.

One fact, easily accessible, yet, somehow, newly emphasized by Geffroy, is the variety of Monet's experience. He has been, as I have said, a figure painter. He has dealt also, and dealt beautifully, with still life. He has painted rivers and the sea, haystacks and poplars. In Rouen, Venice, and London, as well as in Paris, he has painted architecture with a peculiar *flair* for its character. He has been a fairly active traveller, and Geffroy follows him to many points of the compass. A full and rich life has been Monet's, unified by a single-hearted devotion to light, atmosphere, and color. How has it all fared with him? How have the Fates treated his magnificently sustained effort? In so far as they have been embodied in the French critics of his time it may be said that they took a long time to recognize his abilities. Monet preserves at Giverny an extraordinary collection of press cuttings. Geffroy has had access to it, and a great deal of his space, too much, in fact, is given to



Matinée sur la Seine

FROM THE PAINTING BY CLAUDE MONET

citations from these peccant judges. The ineptitude of one of them, M. Roger Ballu, "*inspecteur des Beaux-Arts, critique officiel*," may suffice here as a terrible example. Glancing at an exhibition held by Monet and Cézanne in 1877, this worthy said: "One must have seen these lamentable canvases to imagine what they are. They promote laughter. They denote the profoundest ignorance of draftsmanship, of composition, and of color. When children amuse themselves with paper and a box of colors they do better."

One can sympathize a little with *le bon* Ballu over his revolt against Cézanne, but that Monet should have thus affected him is, as Geffroy says, merely stupefying. It does not matter. The Ballus, the Jules Clareties, the Albert Wolffs, and all the rest of the malcontents have gone down the wind. And even in those long years during which they were of some influence in the world Monet had his backers. He had his friends in what has come to be known as the Impressionist group—Manet, Degas, and the rest. He had a tower of strength in Paul Durand-Ruel, and it is gratifying to meet in quotations from the latter the liveliest testimony to American appreciation. "Without America," he exclaims, "I would have been lost, ruined, after having bought so many Monets and Renoirs. The two exhibitions I made there in 1886 saved me. The American public bought moderately, it is true, but thanks to that public Monet and Renoir were enabled to live, and after that the French public

followed suit." It is interesting to note also that when, in 1889, Monet launched his campaign for the purchase of Manet's "Olympia" as a gift to the state, two Americans, Alexander Harrison and John Sargent, were among the subscribers to the fund. While I am touching upon this subject I may express the wish that Monet might know something, if he does not already know it, about the fruits of his influence here. To say that men like Alden Weir, Childe Hassam, and John H. Twachtman were worthy of him in their handling of his principles would be to put the matter mildly. If Monet could have seen the room at the San Francisco Exposition filled with the paintings of John Twachtman I feel certain that he would have doffed his hat as to a fellow master.

Recurring to the "Olympia" episode, I must pause upon the strength of character in Monet which it illustrates. When he initiated the plan it was not by any means easy going where the authorities were concerned. A squabble that he got into with Antonin Proust only needed a spark to explode it into a duel. But with the aid of all the progressive artists in Paris Monet pulled the thing through. He got the picture into the Luxembourg, at any rate, and in 1907, thanks to the good offices of Clemenceau, then in power, he saw Manet established in the Louvre. In his quiet way he has always been, if not precisely a fighter, at all events the stanch adherent of a cause. And little by little the critics, the public, and the government itself have

come round. In 1892, when the decoration of the Hôtel de Ville was going forward, Jules Breton withdrew, on account of ill health, from participation in the series of landscapes assigned to him, Harpignies, Pelouse, and others. The question of a substitute for Breton was brought up before a commission. Rodin and Bracquemond voted for Monet, but there were only two other voices to support them, and the commission went to Pierre Lagarde. So it happened in 1892. Thirty years later the state accepts from Monet a great series of his "Nymphéas" and prepares a special hall for their reception in the old orangery of the Tuileries. Thus the sterling old painter assists at the creation of his own monument — a monument to be one of the glories of France. One muses upon it with thoughts positively tender as, in imagination, one observes the venerable master sitting over his game of backgammon with Clemenceau there at Giverny. What memories, what dreams, and fulfilments these two veterans must share!

XVIII

Seven Renoirs

XVIII

SEVEN RENOIRS

A YEAR or two ago, I saw assembled in New York, at the Durand-Ruel Gallery, a group of seven Renoirs which through their qualities and through their dates, which assigned them to a particular period in the life of the artist, took on something of the nature of an historical memorial. They brought back the Renoir who made an individual entry into French art about fifty years ago, affirming a new point of view with a new power. Also, for a student of the movement they represented, they recalled not Renoir alone but a man whose alliance with him and with the other leaders of Impressionism, left, in its turn, an ineffaceable mark. I cannot think of these pictures without thinking of my old friend Paul Durand-Ruel, who preserved them for many years in his home in the Rue de Rome, rich testimonies to his feeling for beauty.

The annals of Impressionism are annals of conflict, of ideas making slow headway against academic reaction, of courage maintaining itself against cruel neglect, of faith ultimately triumphant over ridicule and scorn. Renoir, painting these works in the seventies and early eighties, carried on in them the

fight which had had its first notable skirmish when Manet, Whistler and the rest appeared in the Salon des Refusés of 1863. Paul Durand-Ruel was a participant, a factor, in that battle. He had ranged himself with the proud malcontents from the beginning and soon figured before the world as their propagandist. He was the far-seeing merchant who spurred others on to collect the Impressionists. He was likewise the disinterested connoisseur, delighting in fine things because they were delightful. To talk with him across his table in the Rue de Rome, amid the paintings of Monet and his companions, always gave me the sensation, in a very vivid way, of touching hands with the members of that glorious company. The rooms had a cachet for me unique. They seemed to enshrine the spirit of an act of belief, to deserve a place in the memory akin to that occupied by the famous Salon to which I have alluded. These Renoirs were souvenirs of a habitation as well as of the man who made them, and in approaching them one could not forbear saluting the discernment and the enthusiasm of the man who brought them together.

It is one of the happiest circumstances associated with Impressionism that in its struggle for freedom it remained consistently free, that in establishing a new gospel it escaped the blighting influence of dogma. Every commentator on the school has presently to explain that it was not, strictly speaking, a school at all; that Manet and Monet went

their different gaits; that Degas is of the group only on his own terms; that, in short, the solidarity of Impressionism is a totally different thing from the solidarity of, say, the men of 1830. I need not labor the point here, but I must pause upon it long enough to characterize the entirely personal attitude of Renoir toward the Impressionistic hypothesis of open air light. In Monet the effect of light upon nature rapidly became an intense preoccupation. I don't believe, as I have said elsewhere, he had the specifically scientific bias that has sometimes been attributed to him; but in the evidence which we may be content to draw from his works his curiosity as to purely atmospheric phenomena is unmistakable. With Renoir the point of attack is different. You do not feel that he tackled a problem with an overmastering concern as to what light would do to it. He does not want to prove anything. You feel, rather, that he took light as but an element in his design, an indispensable element, an element previously overlooked and now to be exploited with militant ardor, but an element just the same — playing a part in a constructive whole. His attitude included the handling of light without his being dominated by it. It was the attitude of a painter, a painter who was primarily a colorist.

There is no one else in the Impressionist group, with the possible exception of Manet, who has anything like Renoir's magical, clairvoyant touch

in the manipulation of mere pigment, in the enrichment of mere surface. Oil paint has a witchery of its own. The notes in the gamut of tempera can be made, as the early Florentines so often proved, extraordinarily pure and beautiful. I would not disparage them in order to exalt those of the later medium. But I would emphasize the difference between the two, and I would cite Renoir as a true examplar of the tradition of Velasquez and Vermeer. Manet has his kinship with the Spanish master in the broad strong masses of his blacks and yellows, and sometimes in the pearly loveliness of his flesh tints and the singing quality of his blues. But to Renoir was left the felicity — one of his most personal contributions to Impressionism — of bringing out the beauty of oil paint in an incomparably precious, jewel-like way.

Light interpenetrates his color and makes it lustrous, sensuous, as enchanting to the eye as the red of a pomegranate. He can paint white with a lusciousness that — observing all due respect for the Whistlerians — makes a picture like "The Little White Girl" look almost cold and hard. If you doubt this, examine the whites in "La Loge." I know no others, anywhere, more subtly vitalized. I have wondered momentarily if his experience in porcelain painting at Sèvres had anything to do with the brilliance of his color; but this question arises only to subside. Preternatural insight into

the genius of oil paint offers a much more satisfying explanation, that and a correspondingly exquisite dexterity. Renoir has this grasp upon a medium as Rubens had it, though here again the inevitable qualification, evocative of his originality, forthwith presents itself. Pigment for Rubens is a means to an end, the vehicle for headlong statement. There is something prodigiously virile and even violent about his brushwork; he paints at topmost speed; he knows his medium, he uses it with gusto — but does he love it for its own sake? There is power in his touch, but no tenderness. He flings his color on the canvas with a masterful gesture; he does not caress it. Renoir does this peculiarly painter-like thing.

He can be as "fat" as Rubens, as weighty, as sumptuous, but some delicacy of taste in him that Rubens knew nothing about keeps him very refined. There are passages in "La Loge," as, for example, in the painting of the gloved hands and wrists of the woman, which in technical fineness and grace fairly make your mouth water. And you will find the same marvellous beauty of facture developed in certain others of these pictures in a great fulness and harmony. The "Danseuse" is a little miracle in pure painting. "Sur la Terrasse" is another. The reds and the greens in the latter have the transparent radiance of precious stones. The tangle of leafage and flowers against which the figures are placed is a web of jewelled color, its threads

and its interstices alike lifted to a higher power by the intervention of light.

All this betokens, as I have said, the painter, the technician, the virtuoso exercising his brush with a kind of passion of craftsmanship and exulting in its precision, its finesse, its searching eloquence. Who else in the great circle has wielded so supple an instrument, one so sure, or one so perfectly adjusted to the very grain and essence of oil paint? But there are still other grounds on which this group of pictures ascribes to Renoir a position of singularity. He alone of them all is the hierophant of beauty existing in and for itself. Manet is enamored of the truth of life; he is the recorder, not the interpreter. Monet, in his so different domain, has similar functions. Only in the celebrated "Nymphéas" of his later years has he seemed to divine in nature a grace lying like a benediction on tangible fact. Degas, if he looked for beauty everywhere, even in ugliness, fused with the draftmanship that links him to his beloved Ingres the mordant philosophy of a cynic. He dreamed dreams of antiquity in his youth, but as time went on he saw the world as an essentially prosaic spectacle. Renoir saw it with the fervid glance of a Giorgione.

In Impressionism, I may say in the whole range of the French art of his time, he is preeminently the painter of the *joie de vivre*, the sole inspired singer of proud "hosannas of the flesh" that, by the

DANSEUSE

FROM THE PAINTING BY RENOIR

same token, are never fleshly. A pell-mell of his nudes comes to mind with this reflection, glowing blond figures reviving the Venetian key of Palma, but the truth is that they are not needed to enforce the point as we traverse the glorious seven of which I write. Consider the mundane luxury of "La Loge," the warmth and well-being of "Sur la Terrasse," the blithe youth in the "Danseuse," and, above all, the ebullience, the bodily glow, the happy animation, of "Le Déjeuner des Canotiers." He takes the glory of the senses and makes it the guiding principle of his art, mirrors the splendor of life in the beauty of light and air and color, records the truth and invests it with æsthetic charm. It is the truth, the life, of a sophisticated *monde*. Once in this series, in the "Pêcheuses de Moules," humanity receives its commentary in very simple human terms. The fisherfolk are portrayed with all the sincerity in the world; the accent is altogether one of homely realism. We are not far from the same sentiment in the "Femme au Chat." But in the other paintings life is an urban affair, rich with the beauty of fair faces, fine stuffs, the exhilaration of health and pleasure.

The little figurine of the "Danseuse," characteristically, is no starveling sparrow of the *coulisses*, as Degas might have made her. We think not of her hard-worked young muscles but of her lissome sweetness. She is doubtless in the ballet but not wholly of it; she is Renoir's vision of the footlights,

an image of beauty he has reft from their garishness. With what melting nuances of tone does he paint the half-graceful, half-awkward form, and the filmy dress! His brush seems to hover over the problem, it is so suave, so infinitely delicate in its pressure. And behind it all lies the strength of a master. That is the final impression received from the imposing seven. They are the works of a great painter, an authoritative man of his hands. They come down to us from his golden years, when he was in the full flush of his powers. "La Loge" and the "Danseuse" were painted in 1874, when he was but thirty-three. Five years later he painted the "Pêcheuses" and then in 1880 "Au Concert" and the "Femme au Chat." "Sur la Terrasse" came a year later and at about the same time "Le Déjeuner des Canotiers." The seven date from a period of seven years. They were years, I repeat, of unremitting strife. Impressionism was not by any means in the saddle when these canvases were thrown into the fray. But the man who painted them was in the saddle, in complete command of his high abilities.

He interrogates life with a truly seeing eye. He grasps the truth with the whole *plein air* apparatus, as it were, at his finger-tips. What he sees he defines with equal force, ease, propriety, and, most interestingly of all, with characteristic racial fidelity to the rectitude of art. A revolutionist, there are nevertheless no revolutionary eccentricities or excesses

clinging about his artistic character. That, for all his independence of academic precedent, is absolutely in harmony with the immemorial tradition of French painting, the tradition that is the servant of beauty. Apropos of this significance of the seven paintings, I come back to the special nature of the group they make. When there was talk of a monument to Cézanne, and Renoir was appealed to in its interests, he wrote to Claude Monet expressing his disgust at the idea of a nude figure for the thing. He could put up with a bust, a bust would go very well into the museum at Aix, if it were accompanied by an example of the artist. But the latter was imperative. "I feel that a painter ought to be represented by his painting," said he. His conception is exactly realized in the present instance. The seven Renoirs make an ideal monument.

XIX

Odilon Redon

XIX

ODILON REDON

Odilon Redon was born at Bordeaux in 1840. He was an impressionable child, and the sentiments promoted in his nature by early contact with the Pyrenees and the melancholy region of the Landes appear to have been fostered by an indulgent father. He loved art and music when he was a boy. At that time, too — and the point is significant — he had a proper sense of "*mon originalité.*" When the time came he went to Paris and studied under Gérôme, but struggled in vain to "render form" with anything like academic authority. It was not that he was unwilling to learn how to draw. It was simply that he had an incurable fondness for doing things in his own way, in accordance with what he believed to be a kind of spiritual independence. It is a fine gospel, not without its perils. The war of 1870 led him away from his studies and his dreams, but it did him good. In the clash of arms he found himself, and on settling down in the studio again he felt his resources stirring within him in a new way, his ideas being clarified. In his essay on Redon, prefixed to the catalogue of the latter's etchings and lithographs issued by the Société pour l'Etude de la Gravure Française, M. André Mellerio has much to

say about the influences accepted by the artist. He was devoted to Leonardo, Rembrandt, and Dürer. Among the moderns he preferred Delacroix. In music he was all for the noblest masters, for Beethoven and Bach. One thinks, with all these heroical landmarks in sight, of another Puvis de Chavannes. But there are some surprises in store.

After the ideals in painting and music to which I have referred, there came, for Redon, in literature, the writings of Poe, Flaubert, Baudelaire, Huysmans, and Stephané Mallarmé; which is to say that, after his instinct for grandeur in art, came a passion for the macabre. The fall was too far. A great artist was lost in a decadent. His paintings expose a kind of dual character. They show us his best side, to begin with, in the beauty of their color. There are no half measures about the "*inspiration Redonesque*," to use M. Mellerio's rather overwrought phrase. When he uses a vivid color he gives it its fullest possible value. But he keeps it very pure, and he sees to it that his reds and yellows and blues are intrinsically fine. Merely for their sensuous brilliance his paintings would command a little more than respectful consideration. There is genuine fire in them. In the next moment, however, we are on shifting ground, and respect is tinged with dubiety. We begin to reflect on the ideas embodied in the pictures, and the problem takes a decidedly different twist. It is the lovely poetic intention that we note first, the exquisiteness of the impulse driving

the artist to paint high-erected themes, "Orpheus," "Phaeton," "Apollo," even "Saint John." Almost, but not quite, does he succeed with them. The large, wild romantic gesture is there, the hint of mystery, the vague echo of "*mon originalité.*" But something is missing, something that would turn these fascinating but amorphous sketches into pictures. It is the power of construction, of sustained imagination, which is the power of the normal creative master.

Redon has visions, but they are formless and unwholesome. He invokes the aid of imagination, but he cannot rise to its rarefied plane. It is instructive to turn over the scores of plates in M. Mellerio's admirable catalogue. Redon has been an ardent, prolific lithographer, and his work on the stone exposes the full range of his ideas. From beginning to end they make it pathetically obvious that he has never soared to the intellectual companionship of his beloved Leonardo and Rembrandt and Dürer, but has remained on the merely bizarre, decadent plane of Felicien Rops, that Belgian type of Parisian diabolism, or of Goya in the worst of his charnel-house moods. Symbolism runs riot in his designs and always in a nightmarish direction. And, while linear passages of an extraordinary delicacy not infrequently appear in these more than fantastic works of his, the broad impression one receives is of the student who struggled in vain, under Gérôme, to "render form." Is it, then, by a failure of technic that we are to account for

his failure convincingly to affirm the "*inspiration Redonesque*"? Only in part. The true explanation lies deeper, in the artist's habit of mind, its sickliness and its want of veritable imaginative force. Redon is a type of the modern hunger for release from ordinary, prosaic thought and conditions. He is another exemplar of the wistful school, sympathetic, suggestive, genuinely interesting, but somehow ineffectual.

XX

Cézanne

XX

CÉZANNE

A PORTRAIT by Cézanne was once shown to Whistler. Said he: "If a child of ten were to draw like that upon his slate, his mother, if she were a good mother, would spank him for it." But M. Ambroise Vollard, the Parisian dealer, who tells us the anecdote, is of quite another mind, and he, in similar circumstances, would probably frame the slate. He knew the painter well, bought as many of his works as he could get hold of, and made them the leading attraction of his gallery in the Rue Laffitte. Then, as a testimony to the faith that was in him and as a monument to his friend, he himself published "Paul Cézanne," a truly sumptuous folio, written with affectionate care and illustrated with the richest possible array of paintings and drawings, many of the former reproduced in photogravures or in color plates. Nor is M. Vollard by any means alone in his appreciation of this artist. Théodore Duret, who in his book on "Manet and the Impressionists" wrote the first full biographical sketch of Cézanne, upon which Vollard and all other commentators have since freely drawn, speaks of "the distinctive and isolated nature of his art," and credits him with at least one peculiarity "of a very high order of merit." Since then the commentators have

been legion. Where, precisely, does the truth reside?

For a hero-worshipper, M. Vollard is delightfully discreet. His idolatry appears between the lines rather than in the actual text of his narrative. The latter makes, indeed, a really charming introduction to the life of Cézanne, more particularly in its earlier stages. From M. Duret's book we have long known how fortunate were the circumstances of the artist, how the rich banker at Aix who was his father first frowned upon his ambitions, but soon encouraged them, sending him to Paris with an allowance, and how all his life Cézanne was in a position to please himself. But M. Vollard tells us more and incidentally paints a pretty picture of the boy Cézanne getting his first lessons in drawing from an old Spanish monk, flinging himself with ardor upon his classical studies at the lycée, and, above all, giving himself up to the romantic dreams of youth.

Zola was his comrade in those golden days. Another was one Baptistin Baille, who appears to have been of a philosophical turn of mind. He looked after the profundities while the future author of "Nana" declaimed the poems of Musset, Hugo, and Lamartine, and Cézanne advanced tremendous theories of art, based on the masterpieces of Veronese, Rubens, and Rembrandt. The canny Cézanne père, much bewildered and not a little scandalized by all this, was hardly reconciled to it when his son brought home a prize for drawing from the local academy. "*Enfant*,

enfant," he would go on murmuring, "*songe à l'avenir! On meurt avec du génie, et l'on mange avec de l'argent.*" But, as has been said, he relented after a despairing effort to force the lad into the law, and by the time he was twenty-two Cézanne's wish was realized. He joined Zola in Paris, entered himself as a student at the Académie Suisse, on the Quai des Orfèvres (in 1861), and thenceforth to the day of his death, in 1906, was the happy painter, practising his profession with but trifling opposition of a parental nature.

He was of bourgeois origin and remained of a bourgeois temperament. His strong likes and dislikes were generally expressed with a decisively Bohemian accent. An old painter, recalling him in his young manhood, describes him as wearing a red waistcoat — *à la* Gautier — and always putting his hand in his pocket to pay for a chum's dinner. He was kindly and, I surmise, a little coarse, a point to be inferred, by the way, as well from certain of his works as from his quoted speech. Rejecting the discipline of the schools in favor of his own hypothesis of the art of painting, he nevertheless frequented the Louvre and sat with a kind of haughty reverence at the feet of the old masters. Rubens is echoed, faintly, in his earlier works. In the course of his formative years he fell in with Courbet and emulated him. As the Impressionists came into view he attached himself to the group at the Café Guerbois and afterward at the Nouvelle Athènes, but seems to have rebelled against

the dominating influence of Manet. I may note in passing his observation of Forain, "who knew even then how to indicate the fold in a garment," and whom he once discovered in the Louvre copying Chardin, a fragment of biography precious to the connoisseur of the great French draftsman. Delacroix also touched his sympathies and encouraged in him, momentarily, a romantic impulse. He had all the time some of the traits of the average artist. He would have exhibited at the Salon if he could have obtained admission, but had to wait many a long year before he was let in. On the other hand, he was faithful to his inner convictions. He went on painting in his own way so long as he remained in Paris and was only confirmed in it when finally he withdrew to his native town and settled down as more or less of a recluse.

The career described by M. Vollard is honorable and not without a certain touching dignity. But that it should appear touching is an indication of the element of weakness even then threatening the ultimate fame of Cézanne. When, on his arrival in Paris, he unsuccessfully sought admission to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, one of the examiners explained his failure by saying that he had the temperament of a colorist, but painted "with excess." He always painted with excess. M. Vollard cites the current opinion of the sixties on Cézanne's method. It was that he tackled a piece of white canvas with a pistol charged to the muzzle with all sorts of colors. Later he simplified his chromatic

scheme. It is the claim of his partisans that he triumphs by virtue of his color. They say he is a master of values; that with a few tones of green, gray, and red he achieves immortal things. But those things, I fear, lie altogether in the eye of the fond beholder. That individuality of which Cézanne thought so much possibly struggled along some definitely thought out lines toward the expression of a high ideal. Unfortunately the last successful phase of the struggle did not come off. Cézanne stayed what he was at the beginning, a painter wandering about in worlds unrealized, too imperfectly equipped to say what he had to say, if, indeed, that was worth saying.

There is a point bearing upon this question of intrinsic values which I must discuss briefly. The veteran John Sartain aptly remarked once that the status of a work of art is determined by the choice spirits of the world, not by the Philistines. It is an unanswerable saying. No doubt it savors of a pharisaical superiority to those who stand by the good old democratic axiom that one man's opinion is as good as another's — but it happens to be true. Also, it is a truth equally applicable among artists themselves. They produce great art exactly in proportion to their inborn alliance with the choice spirits of the world. Was Cézanne thus allied to them? Neither M. Vollard nor Cézanne in his works can so persuade me for the fraction of a second. He was sincere, yes, and I know with what gusto that trait is

elevated into an artistic virtue by the backers of a type like Cézanne. It may be, indeed, a virtue, but not in the sense that it is also an asset, a quality automatically productive of beauty. It is compatible, of course, with the production of stupid ugliness. If sincerity by itself were to make a work of art, then it would enable some inventor of perpetual motion to pull through. It is important, therefore, to recognize the fact that Cézanne's sincerity is beside the point. It does not keep him from being commonplace, mediocre, a third rate painter. If the reader finds these terms harsh, let him examine closely into the works by Cézanne, let him look at them with an open mind and see what they have to offer to the eye and the imagination.

The best of them offer, to begin with, a fair enough approximation to the forms of things seen. I recall a "Portrait of a Man" as an acceptable bit of ordinary realism. So is a landscape called "L'Estaque," in which the huddle of red roofs seen between trees against a gray background provided by the sea is handled with a mildly engaging sympathy. But what nonsense to pretend to discover in this picture the distinction, the beauty, which alone lifts a piece of painting out of the ruck! And this is what we have to reckon, in the mass of Cézanne's work, as really nothing more than a deviation into something like success. As a rule he flounders. Far more characteristic is a picture like "The François Zola Dam," Ob-

sessed by some vague theory — of no earthly interest to the spectator until it is justified by results — he gropes among his ground forms and strives painfully to bring them into some sort of pictorial unity. The effort fails. The canvas is crude, unlovely. It is the same with his sketchy water-colors. The hints at form which they contain have no artistic charm. They are but the shreds and patches of an uncertain purpose. In those fumblings of his around the secrets of nature Cézanne may have had glimpses which did make him less forlorn, but he transmits to us nothing of the joy he may have derived from them. Partly this is due to his limitations as a workman, to the harsh, uninspired technic which excludes all hope of style, of linear felicity. But even more it is due to the humdrum nature of his vision. Witness his more or less celebrated picture of "The Two Sisters." That absolutely representative example follows in design the routine of the Salon. The leaden folds in the dress of the foremost figure (why didn't he take a leaf from Forain's book!) seem calculated to get the utmost possible dulness out of a banal motive. The drawing is as heavy-handed in detail as it is in the larger contours of the scheme. In the color, where Cézanne is supposed to be "magisterial," this painting is ineffably dreary, ineffably lacking in quality. It is, in short, a dolorous performance. Which brings me to the Cult.

Celebrities like Cézanne are the products of mis-

taken enthusiasm. Their vogue in Paris is explicable on the ground of an amiable weakness. Art is the completely absorbing interest of thousands there, and participation in a historic moment, nay, even a casual relation to the affairs of some memorable period, will secure for quite unimportant individuals a certain niche. Then the literary man is always grateful for a topic. In London and in New York a Cézanne is a doubly welcome theme. He is new and strange. There are romantic implications in the annals. He was one of the generation that knew Manet, and so on and so on. His whole atmosphere is favorable to the envelopment of his art in an esoteric mystery. Born, reared and long neglected in, say, Philadelphia, there would be no special excitement about discovering him. But if you can call a man "the great Aixois," you've got something to go on with. So we have dithyrambs on Cézanne by rhetoricians who know that he is wonderful and feel that he is sublime, and even so clairvoyant a critic as Huneker would sententiously remark: "Think of Bouguereau and you have his antithesis in Cézanne." Why drag in Bouguereau? To suggest that, in the antithesis, there is something to be put to Cézanne's credit? Why not Claude, or Corot, or Degas, or Ingres, or any master, comparison with whom exposes the inferiority of Cézanne without uncovering any nakedness of his own? Well, Mr. Huneker, who wrote shrewdly if not altogether convincingly on Cézanne, had to have his witty gay-

eties. But there is really more occasion for sorrow than for mirth in the facility with which these specious reputations are drummed up in modern art. The mission of the painter is to create beautiful pictures. It is a function which Cézanne pathetically missed.

XXI

Gauguin

XXI

GAUGUIN

In the book about Paul Gauguin published by his friend Charles Morice in 1919, the best literary memorial to the artist which exists, there is a section entitled "Le Maître de Taiti." To-day there are many to whom Gauguin is "the master." On the other hand, Mr. Sargent once had occasion to say of certain of the pictures painted by this Franco-Peruvian that they struck him as "admirable in color, and in color only." If the matter is still in debate it is for a rather factitious reason. Would Gauguin remain "the master" if he had stayed at home? I doubt it. Half the furore raised about him is traceable to his sequestration in the South Seas. His death there made him the hero of a legend. A contribution was made to this in the shape of "The Letters of Paul Gauguin," published with a foreword by Frederick O'Brien, a leading figure in the Tahitian cult. Here are gathered together the missives of the artist to his friend Daniel Monfreid, who did what he could to keep him going in his self-sought exile. They give us further revelations of the life and character of the man. Incidentally, they help a little to clarify the subject of his art.

Gauguin was born at Paris in 1848, was taken to Peru and brought back to France while still a child, received some education in a Jesuit seminary, served briefly in the navy as a common sailor, and in 1871 left the sea to turn stock broker! He was successful in finance. Miss Ruth Pielkovo, the translator of his correspondence and the author, presumably, of the commentary that accompanies it, remarks that during his activities in the Rue Laffitte he made something like thirty or forty thousand francs a year. Then, with a suddenness of which Mr. Somerset Maugham made the most when he wrote "The Moon and Sixpence," he began to paint, shook off his wife and children, and dedicated himself entirely to the brush. There was a time, in the eighties, when he settled in Brittany and produced, with some talent, fairly unconventional pictures. Later came a flying trip to Martinique. On his return to his native land he had some associations with Van Gogh. In 1891 he went to Tahiti and thenceforth, save for a visit home, continued in his remote fastness until he died in the Marquesas in 1903.

In the South Seas, his disciples would have us believe, he found the secret of a new heaven and a new earth. What was it? He himself, as was natural enough, never formulated it. "You know," he once wrote to a friend, "that though others have honored me by attributing a system to me I have never had one, and could not condemn myself to it if I had. To

paint as I please, bright to-day, dark to-morrow. The artist must be free or he is not an artist. 'But you have a technic,' they say. No; I have not, or rather I have one, but it is a vagabond sort of thing, and very elastic. It is a technic that changes constantly, according to the mood I am in, and I use it to express my thought, without bothering as to whether it truthfully expresses exterior nature." It is permissible — for the acolytes — to read into this the magnificent independence of a great creative artist. I would read it there myself, probably, if the works authorized me to do so. But in the light of what they have to say I am inclined to infer from the pronouncement aforesaid nothing more nor less than the wayward egotism of an artist who never quite mastered his medium or his instruments. As I pointed out at the time of the celebrated Armory Show, when Gauguin was one of the "new" men brought to the fore, the only pertinent question to be asked regarding him is, "Does he know how to paint?"

What he didn't like is easily seen. In one of his letters he alludes to "Baudry and his crowd." There is a fleer in another at Bouguereau. He is blighting on the subject of "the Seminary of Meissonier and his like." Study of Baudry, I may note in passing, would have done him good, but one can sympathize with his repulsion from Bouguereau and Meissonier. He had, no doubt, the root of the matter in him. In a letter of his Parisian visit in 1893 there is a passage

eloquent of an artist sensitive to the true distinctions of the schools. "I'm just back from a six days' trip in Belgium," he says. "It was fine. I saw some Memlings at Bruges — what marvels! my dear fellow, and afterward, on seeing Rubens (entering into naturalism), it's a comedown." Only a man with authentic taste would have registered that discriminating touch. But, again, Rubens might have aided him through showing him the value of discipline and construction. The truth is that there was little if anything reflected in Gauguin's cosmos. It is pretty to visualize him as a man of ideas withdrawn to an exotic solitude and there spinning masterpieces out of his entrails, but, though it is pretty, it is not exact. He was a haphazard type. His characteristic mood is thus hit off to Monfreid:

I am going to let you into my secret a bit. There is a great deal of logic in it and I act methodically. From the outset I knew that it would be a day-to-day existence; so, naturally, I've had to accustom my temperament to that. Instead of wasting my strength working and worrying about to-morrow I put everything into the present, like a fighter who does not move until the moment of struggle. When I go to bed at night I say to myself — "One more day gained, to-morrow I may be dead."

In my work of painting it is the same thing. I only think of the present. But the methodical way is to arrange matters so that things follow smoothly, and not do on the 5th what should be done on the 20th. The madrepores do the same — and at the end quite a lot of ground is covered. If only people did not spend so much time in

useless and unrelated work! One stitch a day — that's the great point.

Is it the programme of a philosopher or of a beachcomber? Does it spell heroic concentration or, at bottom, an incurable irresponsibility? The answer lies in the broad drift of his letters. "See what I did with my household!" he exclaims, "I cut loose from it without warning. My family will get out of its scrapes by itself, so far as I am concerned! I want to finish my life here, in this house, in perfect quiet. Ah, yes, I am a great criminal! What does it matter? So was Michael Angelo; and I am not Michael Angelo." I ignore the question of criminality and look solely to the question of art. The difference between him and Michael Angelo was not a matter of morals, but one of æsthetic principle. I see in him the beachcomber rather than the philosopher, because I see not a man of ideas, but a creature of impulse. "So far," he writes in 1899, "I have put nothing on canvas but intention and promises." He was not precisely ashamed of the avowal. It was better, he thought, than "this great fault of treating all canvases as easel pictures." He had no patience with the men who "try to excuse their lack of imagination, of creative power, by the finesse and perfection of their craftsmanship." It is a good saying, but, I repeat, Gauguin would have been the better for more of the very finesse and perfection of craftsmanship to which he alludes.

The explanation of his failure lies in a fact which, by

implication, is made sufficiently clear in this book. Through an inevitable association of ideas we assume that a man who buries himself among savages in the South Sea Islands must have something primitive about him. Gauguin wasn't even in a rudimentary sense a primitive. He was as worldly-wise and sophisticated a being as ever trod the pavements of Paris. There is much talk about his preferring the natives to the whites in Tahiti, about his adopting native dress and habits. Almost any hard-bitten habitué of Montmartre might have done the same thing if he had had the same self-indulgent impulses. If Gauguin made a mess of his life in Tahiti it was because he hadn't the courage, hadn't the nature, to "go the whole hog." He never became whole-heartedly a native. He was from beginning to end a Parisian type, seeking to live *al fresco* what time he drew an income from picture-selling at home. His tragedy consisted simply in the fact that the income was unspeakably hard to get. The letters to Monfreid make one long plaint over the difficulties of practical existence and the necessity for remittances from purchasers. Dip into the correspondence at random, and you come upon nothing so frequently as upon the discussion of ways and means. Marooned (of his own volition) in far-away Tahiti, Gauguin is forever keeping an eye upon his status at home. "It seems that my success is growing in the North." "My Tahitian work has had a moral success among the artists, but the result, so far as the vulgar public went, was — not one centime." In one of the longest

of his letters he frames a scheme for the creation of an income of 2,400 francs a year. He is to send over annually a collection of fifteen pictures and as many subscribers are to put in 160 francs each, drawing lots for the painting that in each case is to be the reward. It is pathetic, obviously. But the "primitive" goes by the board.

Lightly to disparage Gauguin's efforts to acquire a decent return for his labor would be not only cruel but stupid. It would be to flout the instinct of self-preservation. But the passages I have cited are legitimate touchstones whereby to test the grain of this painter's mind. One may deplore his sufferings and still decline to regard them as those of an inspired artist retiring to the wilderness from exalted motives and, for the sake of his art, holding the world well lost. For the life of me, I cannot discover that kind of primitive in the letters to Monfreid. I behold, rather, a painter of modest talent, who from egotism and whim strayed into a strange land, got into a pickle there, and paid a grievous penalty. He was a Montmartrois out of place. He took no spark of esoteric genius with him to Tahiti, and he found there nothing of the sort. "To be hard as a stone," he says, "means to be as strong as a stone." It did not mean this for Gauguin. He painted a number of pictures from inherently picturesque subjects, painted some of them middling well and a few with an approach to felicity. The rest, as I have hinted, is pure legend.

Monfreid told him so when, near the end, Gauguin

proposed to come back to France. This best of friends then candidly wrote him:

> It is to be feared that your return would only derange the growing and slowly conceived ideas with which public opinion has surrounded you. Now you are that legendary artist who, from out of the depths of Polynesia, sends forth his disconcerting and inimitable work — the definitive work of a man who has disappeared from the world. Your enemies (and you have many, as have all who trouble the mediocre) are now silent, do not dare to combat you, do not even think of it; for you are so far away! You must not return. Now you are as are the great dead. You have passed into the history of art.

His friend was right. It is doubtful if Gauguin's celebrity would have survived his reappearance upon the Parisian scene. I take leave to doubt if it will ultimately survive in any serious measure, leaving him more than an interesting minor type. Sooner or later, when the present vogue of modernistic tendencies has passed, it will be recognized that an artist "who has disappeared from the world" is no more dowered by that fact with exceptional gifts than an artist who is good to his wife and mother is made a master in the process. In the long run the letters will be useful in bringing about a proper appraisal of "the master of Tahiti" in that they will help to develop a clearer conception of just what his sojourn in the Pacific meant. They are compiled, of course, to advance the man's repute. Among readers unbitten by the Gauguin mania they will not altogether do this. To be hard as a stone

is not to be really admirable. The letters expose only too vividly a gross and selfish nature. Yet here and there a likable trait peeps out. "I want to ask something of you," he writes to Monfreid. "If you have a bit of good luck with the sales, I wish you would send me a few bulbs and seeds of flowers. Simple dahlias, nasturtiums, and sunflowers of various sorts, flowers that can stand the hot climate — whatever you can think of. I want to decorate my little plantation; and, as you know, I adore flowers. What they have here are mostly shrubs, very few annuals — a few roses, but they do not do very well." There was a love of beauty struggling somewhere in his complex make-up. An artless sincerity peeps forth from behind a brutally cynical and self-centred temperament.

There are a few suggestive passages, too, relating to the purely artistic side of Gauguin. Writing to Monfreid about his biggest, most ambitious canvas, he says:

> I look at it by the hour and (I'll admit it to you) I admire it. The more I look at it the more I realize its enormous mathematical faults, but I would not retouch it for anything. It must remain as it is — only a sketch if you like. Yet this question comes up and perplexes me: Where does the execution of a painting commence and where does it end? At that moment when the most intense emotions are in fusion in the depths of one's being, when they burst forth and when thought comes up like lava from a volcano, is there not then something like an explosion? The work is created suddenly, brutally if you like, and is not its appearance great, almost superhuman?

The cold calculations of reason have not presided at this birth, for who knows when in the depths of early being the work was commenced? Have you ever noticed that when recopying a sketch, done in a moment of emotion and with which you are content, only an inferior copy results, especially if you correct the proportions, the mistakes your reason tells you are there?

This fragment represents the best that was in Gauguin, the artist, freed for a moment from material preoccupations, musing imaginatively on the things that count. It is interesting to speculate on what he might have made of his art if he had longer maintained such a mood. He thought, no doubt, that he was placating his dæmon when he said: "I have come to an unalterable decision — to go and live forever in Polynesia." Perhaps he was right. But I wonder if the Polynesian adventure did not do him more harm than good, in leaving him what it found him, an artist inadequately equipped.

XXII

Van Gogh

XXII

VAN GOGH

THERE is a famous sonnet in which that brilliant parodist J. K. Stephen once paid his compliments to Wordsworth. A line from it will serve my purpose here: "Two voices are there — one is of the deep" — and the other talked rubbish. The criticism is apposite in approaching the work of Vincent van Gogh.

The first light that is thrown upon the subject by the evidence I have observed, illuminates what may fairly be called the conventional bases of Van Gogh's art. He had at bottom the capacities of an ordinary realistic contributor to the Salon. There is a picture by him of a large Bible laid open upon a table beside a candlestick. It might have been painted by almost any clever young fellow in Paris who had dabbled in the "brown sauce" of the old Dutch school. In its quiet way it is almost handsome. It has weight. It is a good bit of painting. It is not, on the other hand, noticeably beautiful. A certain measure of truth, boldly stated, would appear to have been the artist's sole aim. There are a few other canvases of kindred character which invite much the same comment, leaving one with the impression that if Van Gogh had gone on in this vein we would never have heard much about him.

What would have happened if, instead, he had persisted in cultivating the influence of Millet as it is reflected in several of his paintings and drawings? He was moved not only to emulate but to copy the master. A discipleship so pronounced might easily have carried him far. There is one of his drawings, "Woman Digging Potatoes," which shows that as a draftsman he could be not unworthy of Millet. For a moment imagination pauses upon the idea that at one time Van Gogh must have had in him potentialities as a delineator of form. Over and over again in his black-and-whites we come upon testimonies to the fact that he could draw, not brilliantly, not with the accent of style, but with the ability of a sound workman. But then the influence of Millet fades and that of the Impressionists takes its place.

It is neither from Manet nor from Monet that his impressionism derives. When we look at the "Moulin de la Galette" or at the "Restaurant Cristal" or at the "Garden of Daubigny" we think of Sisley and Pissarro. He has something of their light touch — something of their springlike gamut of color. In one of these paintings, the "Garden of Daubigny," Van Gogh possesses what Pissarro and Sisley possess. He has charm, and this peeps out again in the lovely color and delicate surface of his "Still Life — Jug and Lemons." But these flashes are few in number compared with the broad drift of Van Gogh's work and with the development of what may be classified as his Post-Impression-

ist productions — the productions over which the zealots uplift their voices — they disappear altogether. This painter was under forty when he died, and he was mentally unbalanced before he committed suicide. It would not be unfair, therefore, to assume that with years and health he would have beaten out better conceptions of landscapes and of form than he left behind him as the fruits of his later period. But hypothetical guesses, one way or the other, are beside the point. All that we are justified in considering is the intrinsic quality of what he actually did. This is not impressive. His portraits have the vitality of a kind of rough truth. They are crude in handling, commonplace in design, and quite without distinction of style. A "Self Portrait," which I recall as one of the best of them all, had a vividness of characterization not to be denied, and there was some clever painting in it into the bargain, but it was not a work of more than ordinary merit.

Taking his later paintings in a group they mark not gains, but losses. The old sense of form which Millet had stirred in him is gone. So is the resonance of luminous color, which is characteristic of what I may describe as his unadventurous impressionism. He seems now to be moving about in a world unrealized, to be feeling his way toward a solution of his problem which he may have visualized in his inner eye, but which he has failed to place convincingly on the canvas. He uses a thick impasto and leaves upon

his surface great ridges of claylike pigment. Above all, he appears to have thrown overboard any feeling that he may have possessed for pictorial invention and for beauty. There is pathos in the story of his career, yet it is only a weak sentimentality which will allow his personal misfortunes to obscure the truth about his art. It was not a great art. Let the open-minded observer look closely at any of his pictures, ask himself if they convey anything like the sensation that he feels when a work of authentic beauty swims into his ken. When some of the paintings of Van Gogh appeared in the famous Armory exhibition, I said that all they had to tell us was that he was "a moderately competent impressionist, who was heavy-handed, had little, if any, sense of beauty, and spoiled a lot of canvas with crude, quite unimportant pictures." Later exhibitions give no reason for revising this judgment. They have shown that he had his lucky moments, but they have made his fundamental limitations equally plain.

XXIII

Early American Portraiture

XXIII

EARLY AMERICAN PORTRAITURE

The origins and earlier developments of American art have of late been receiving renewed attention. Ardent research is bringing highly interesting facts to light, and the whole subject promises to be seen in a better and more impressive perspective when its history comes to be written conclusively. A fresh impetus was given to this movement in connoisseurship by the American wing of the exhibition which was organized at the Metropolitan Museum for the Hudson-Fulton celebration in 1909. That date will always be remembered as significant of much. The Museum, I may observe in passing, has steadily been of service in what I might call the aggrandizement of the American school. I might cite evidences of a growing appreciation of our artistic patrimony in the activities discernible in museums throughout the country, in the galleries of the dealers, in the increased ardor of private collectors, and in the publication of divers helpful books. But I write now with particular reference to a remarkable contribution made to the subject at the Union League Club in New York. It deserves to be recorded as adding uniquely to the resources of the student, giving him an opportunity to

make a really exhaustive survey of our pioneer portraiture.

For many years it has been customary at this club to hold during the winter monthly exhibitions of works of art. The committee of members having these in charge at various times has included men with often deeply interesting enthusiasms. I remember an occasion, long ago, when John Hay was momentarily drafted into service. He was keen upon Spanish painting and talked to me in the most zealous fashion about Goya and Fortuny. He had the intensest conviction about the debt which the modern man owed to his predecessor in respect to technic. Another stimulating figure in former years was Thomas B. Clarke, long known as a leading collector of American art. In that rôle he was first concerned with his contemporaries, but later he turned to the earlier phases of the school, and more recently his ownership of one of the greatest of Gilbert Stuart's portraits of Washington has set a kind of capstone upon his career as an advocate of the American genius in painting. To him the Union League Club turned in the autumn of 1921, and he proceeded to assemble about a score of American portraits for the exhibition of November in that year. He made a good group; but it was obvious that he had only scratched the surface of the subject. Interested already in the painters involved, he realized, too, how these portraits brought back upon the scene personalities frequently

conspicuous in the social and intellectual life of our forefathers, and he saw that he was dealing with one of the most humanly appealing aspects of American history. He put twenty-three more portraits on the walls in the following month and thrice repeated his effort in the winter of 1922. In January, 1923, he contrived another exhibition, and he made two early in 1924. By the time he had hung his last group he had shown a total of one hundred and sixty-seven portraits by sixty-six artists of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Nothing like this series has ever been seen elsewhere in this country. It has made perfectly plain the characteristics of practically all the founders. It has illuminated dark places, bringing to the surface men who have hitherto been only names, even to the most persistent investigators; and it has been of immeasurable service in affirming with a new force the merits of an old tradition. I followed the exhibitions with the minutest care, and I can testify whole-heartedly to their constructive value.

Samuel Isham, in the indispensable book on American painting that he published in 1905, opens with an assertion about the method of our Primitives that the fundamental and mastering fact concerning it is that it is no way native to America, but was transplanted to these shores from Europe. It is a true judgment, but it is a mistake to take it as altogether final. Primitive American art is, no doubt, a derivative art; but the interesting thing about it is that if it inculcated

foreign ideas of style, it also inculcated a habit of good painting as such. That was one of the outstanding lessons of the Union League Club shows. They brought forward some astonishing illustrations of sound technic, a technic which in some instances quite transcended the matter of an alien origin. Gilbert Stuart, for example, did more than pay back the British school in its own coin. I remember one portrait of his at the Union League which was comparable to Velasquez rather than to Reynolds. But I anticipate in making that allusion. Consideration ought to be given beforehand to what I might call some of Mr. Clarke's early surprises. He made us acquainted, for one thing, with Jacobus Gerritsen Strycker, who came to the New Netherlands in 1651 and died here nearly thirty-five years later. He was a man of substance and energy. They made him first a burgher and afterward an alderman, and he held office as attorney-general and sheriff. In the intervals of his career as farmer, trader, magistrate, and office-holder generally he seems to have functioned as a "limner," and, by great good luck, Mr. Clarke was able to run down two of his three known portraits. The first to turn up at the club was one of Adrian Van der Donck, the founder of Yonkers. It is a solid, polished affair, a capable, full-bodied bit of painting, clearly reminiscent of the school of the artist's native Holland. It is piquant to know that this, the earliest portrait painted in America, allies our beginnings with the great tradition of Rembrandt. There

is even a faint trace of a distant personal tie. Strycker's wife had the same surname as the lady whose daughter married the master's son Titus. The other example of his work was a portrait of his brother Jan, painted more freely and broadly. Both portraits made fascinating foot-notes to the opening pages in the story of our school.

It is curious to remark the supremacy of portraiture in those pages. The founders appreciated many of the friendlier appurtenances of life. They dressed and lived well. They liked good furniture and silver. Never was there a people more *soigné*. But their fastidious taste demanded next to no pictorial sustenance, and the little they had was probably brought with other household *impedimenta* from abroad. The typical man of property in our Dutch and English periods might have all the refinement in the world, but he was not precisely æsthetic. The work of art he chiefly sought was the portrait, and he sat for this more with the idea of obtaining a record than because he wanted to add beauty to his belongings. It is primarily for their value as records that the earlier portraits are to be noticed — for that and for a certain simple sincerity. Pieter Vanderlyn's "Johannes Van Vechten," dating from 1719, which cropped out about two hundred years later in Mr. Clarke's first show, displayed there the bald rigidity of a map. But the old fellows were not always so stiff. Another of Mr. Clarke's rarities was Henri Couturier, who was born as far back

as 1626. His portrait of Frederick Philipse, the original owner of Philipse Manor, left a decidedly good impression. The figure in its courtly dress and with its dignified gesture, the rocky background, and the full-rigged ship in the distance, were all painted with a certain easy sophistication. Couturier, like Strycker, was not by any means unworthy of the Dutch tradition. You think from time to time of that tradition, especially as it was filtered through Kneller, when you are traversing early American portraiture, though how direct its influence may have been is another question. But it was, of course, from the British school that our more characteristic Primitives sprang, men like James Claypole, the first native artist of Pennsylvania, Charles Bridges, Henry Benbridge, Robert Feke, John Wollaston, and John Smibert. I group these individuals not in exact chronological order, but as linked in a broad way by the traits of our formative period. The group as a group is, perhaps, nothing to make a song about; but there linger in my memory the charming passages of color and brushwork disclosed by Claypole, the faint Hogarthian note in Wollaston, and the dignity, the rectitude, characterizing them all. In the honesty of their workmanship if in nothing else they prefigured the more creative development of their school. The minor men are sometimes not so very far from their major contemporaries or followers. Blackburn is occasionally on a level with the more formal work of Copley.

Copley was one of those rare types in whom is manifested the principle of growth. He painted portraits in which he seems merely dry and inert, the cultivator of an uninspired precision. But even in his more restrained mood he has elegance and distinction. His portraits of women have great aristocratic charm, and occasionally in the portrait of a man he could rise to heights. His celebrated "Epes Sargent" is a monumental design painted with power; it is almost a masterpiece. That epithet is unreservedly to be applied to the great "Mrs. Fort" in the Wadsworth Athenæum at Hartford. An American must always feel a thrill of pride in the presence of that canvas. Almost any of the great Englishmen might have bettered its color, but none of them could have beaten its swinging brushwork, its flashing bravura, or the fine *ordonnance* which sets the great lady before us in absolutely final terms. Copley was one of the outstanding painters in Mr. Clarke's array, and if the fates had allowed him to be represented there by the "Mrs. Fort" he would have fairly shared the honors with Gilbert Stuart. Still, even then, it would have been necessary to admit that he had only his moments of spectacular triumph. Stuart was not unnaturally the hero of the whole enterprise, for he came forth repeatedly as an exemplar of sustained authority. Superb Stuarts recur to me again and again as I look back over the Union League exhibitions, a great "Robert Thew," an even greater "Joseph Anthony,"

and I cannot resist the temptation to cite another portrait seen at the Knoedler Gallery, a "William Constable," which for gemlike perfection and beauty might have caused Sir Joshua, or even Gainsborough, to look to threatened laurels. But the one shining Stuart episode came in February, 1922, when sixteen of his portraits were hung, among them the "Mrs. Richard Yates."

This is the portrait I had in mind when I was moved, just now, to "drag in Velasquez." No one who cared for pure painting could help thinking of the Spanish master on seeing this portrait. It combines, as a portrait by him combines, firm and weighty statement of fact with a touch equally sure but so light and flowing that the artist seems to be in absolutely effortless command of his instruments. The brushwork is without a flaw. Not a stroke fails to fulfil itself in the exact notation of some nuance of form and tone. And the tone! It is one consummate harmony in silvery grays. Add to that some wonderfully distinguished drawing, a felicitous composition, and the most sympathetic interpretation of an interesting sitter, and you have some idea of the greatness of this lifelike and beautiful portrait. In the preceding month's exhibition a Stuart portrait shown was that of Sir Joshua Reynolds. It looked a little as if it might have been painted by the great man himself. But you thought of nothing derivative when you stood before the "Mrs. Richard Yates"; and if, as I have said, you

Mrs. Richard Yates

FROM THE PORTRAIT BY GILBERT STUART

thought of Velasquez it was only because Stuart and he were obviously at one in seeking to make painted surface exquisite.

Apropos of this question of our indebtedness to foreign influences, the Union League exhibitions demonstrated that in one respect at least we remained generally indifferent to what the London studios had to teach. Although we took over from the British portrait-painters a certain style in the placing of a figure upon the canvas, we rejected that style when we painted groups. Different conditions in social life probably had something to do with it. We had nothing here, either before or after the Revolution, quite corresponding to the court pageantry of England. New York or Philadelphia might have its *grande dame*, but she had no occasion for carrying herself like a duchess, and it never occurred to an American painter to put her on canvas as though she were one. There is nothing more pathetic about the magnificent career of Benjamin West, magnificent in worldly success, but artistically negligible, than his effort to paint great English ladies in the great English style. He only fell upon bathos. Stuart alone caught the trick. He painted his famous full-length of Washington (the one known as the Lansdowne type) with all the academic aplomb of a Reynolds. But that was a *tour-de-force*. The average of our response to the demands of the statelier, more splendid formula in English portraiture was illustrated at the Union League by Copley in his

"Henry Laurens." That was all furniture and background, in which a stilted figure was ill at ease if not quite lost. In the group portraits that Mr. Clarke secured, "The Washington Family," by Edward Savage, was tolerably well composed, but other examples, by John Lewis Krimmel, Joseph Wright, and Washington Alston, revealed more especially a kind of naïve naturalism. The point is not without its larger bearing. Not only in the group portrait but in the study of a single sitter, the early American artist was disposed to infuse a measure of naturalism into the very artifice which he brought from British sources to his aid. That is why, as you follow American portraiture from its earliest period down into the nineteenth century, you are struck by its evolution into forms persistently traditional, yet no longer predominantly foreign.

I recognized this truth when I saw, for example, the "Timothy Matlack" of Charles Willson Peale. This strong portrait of a homespun type gave forth no echo of the English school. It was racy in its simplicity, American in its essence. The fact is that that historic company of Americans over whom Stuart and Copley preside bequeathed to their successors not so much a formula as the life-blood of a formula, not so much a tradition as the wholesome elements residing in that tradition. The Union League exhibitions proved it. They showed that what went on after our direct contacts with England decreased in number was just

a high-minded cultivation of the good things in painting: good modelling, drawing and brushwork, good composition; in short, good artistic manners. To put it bluntly, the founders had breeding and they passed it on. The recipients of that precious gift varied in force and individuality. Some of them have gone down the wind. But it is impossible to forget Thomas Sully, say, or John Neagle, or Samuel F. B. Morse, or Charles Loring Elliott, or John Wesley Jarvis, or Chester Harding. You can't forget them, because what they did they did well, because they were not only conscientious but really adequate craftsmen, and because ingrained in their portraits is the characteristic spirit of America. I have glanced at the interest which the portraits gathered by Mr. Clarke possessed as relics of bygone generations. Through their intervention there seemed to go trooping through the gallery at the club a memorable procession of statesmen, orators, soldiers, authors, actors, and men of affairs. They lived upon the canvas. You knew them in their walk and demeanor. Sometimes their painted presentments were not only animated but beautiful. The spectacle could not but move the observer, giving him a sense of something fine and vital. Certainly it could not but impress him with a conviction of the authentic power of the early American school of portraiture.

XXIV

The American Wing at the Metropolitan Museum

XXIV

THE AMERICAN WING AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

On November 10, 1924, there occurred in New York an event always to be underlined in the history of American art. On that day the Metropolitan Museum opened the doors of its new American Wing, the building given to the city by Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. De Forest. Behind the south façade, formerly that of the old Assay Office in Wall Street, are rooms preserved bodily from the past or constructed in such wise as to revive the environment of the Forefathers. Within them are assembled furniture and other objects illustrating our æsthetic beginnings. Paintings and prints complete the ensemble. To explore the American Wing is to apprehend in singular vividness the spirit in which those men who made the Colonies and those who founded the Republic lived their lives at home and superimposed urbanity upon the site of the primeval wilderness. Many museums in the United States are giving earnest attention to our earlier arts and crafts. But the Metropolitan was the pioneer in this matter, taking a crucial step when it organized the American section of its exhibition for the Hudson-Fulton Celebration in 1909; it has ever since been unremittingly

active in support of the subject, and now, thanks to the gift of this building, it makes a demonstration that is unique not only in this country but in the world.

Europe has of course shown us the way where the honoring of native art is concerned. She has an older ancestry and in consequence greater riches. Paris, for example, has so much that it must be divided among different treasure-houses. She has the Louvre and the Luxembourg, the Cluny and the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. We gather under one roof the collections in which we emulate all four. The circumstance gives a delightful opportunity to the student. Here he may, with extraordinary ease, literally "survey mankind from China to Peru" and observe the art of his own country in a perspective embracing all the nations and all the centuries. For my own part I find the American Wing more interesting as I see it groping about for a place of its own in the cosmos that embraces Egypt and all the rest. It does not hurt but, rather, aids the imagination to come from antiquity into this modern world of ours, and the trustees have done a clever thing in so framing the plan of the new wing that it is entered from the old main building. The only fly in the ointment consists in the fact that the visitor is thus kept from seeing first the Assay Office façade. This was designed by Thompson about a hundred years ago. In its classical dignity it proclaims the severe mood which belonged to our formative

periods, and there would be a certain fitness in bringing the spectator into contact with it at the very outset. However, the scheme is too admirable as it stands for this point to be stressed, and in the arrangement of the wing the transition from European to American sentiment is felicitously marked. In the little gallery through which the approach is made, there hangs the big portrait of "The Washington Family" which Edward Savage painted in 1796. When I first saw this in an exhibition at the Union League Club I longed to see it again in the Metropolitan Museum. It is inspiriting to find it actually there and in an ideal position.

The American Wing does much the same sort of thing as was done in the Swiss National Museum at Zurich a quarter of a century ago. It reconstructs characteristic interiors, endeavoring to minimize the conventional museum effect and to renew, instead, that of a veritable habitation. Space must naturally be reserved for circulation, but so far as is consistent with this the furniture, pictures, and so on are so disposed as to re-create the atmosphere in which the original owners of these things had their being. The only marked concession to the scientific side of museum administration lies in the careful fixing of a chronological sequence. Thus the entrance (on the top floor of a three-story building) takes you into the seventeenth century. Off the central beamed hall, whose trusses have been modelled after those of

the Old Ship Meeting-House at Hingham, Mass., are small rooms in which you may trace our earliest modes of interior design. The type commemorated is, of course, the house and not the hovel, the dwelling which is the mirror, so to say, of the upper middle class, the merchant class, the prosperous class, which, if it went in for plain living, was at all events wont to do its high thinking in simple comfort. It is with a double purpose that I pause here to pay tribute to Mr. R. T. H. Halsey, the distinguished collector of Americana, who has labored heroically over a long period in supervision of the American Wing. With his own scholarship and with that of the many experts whom he has whole-heartedly called to his aid, he has established the wing not only with great charm, but in what would appear to be remarkable historical accuracy. We owe him much for that, and we owe him thanks, too, for those numerous articles in the Museum *Bulletin* into which he has packed the lore of his subject. I shall turn to him for more than one illuminating passage. He has seen his subject steadily and seen it whole. On the top floor the seventeenth century is luminously unfolded. The eighteenth century is also illustrated there, and on the floor below we are initiated more fully into its characteristics. On the floor below that there lie perfectly exposed before us the traits of the early Republic.

To what do all this reconstruction and elucidation

lead? To what reflections and conclusions do they carry us? The visitor to the American Wing will miss the service it is there to render who fails to grasp it as the embodiment of an idea. It is based upon archæological research, but it is concerned essentially with warm human things. It answers first and last the question of countless inquirers, the question as to how the instinct for art was implanted and nourished in the genius of the American people.

There is pleasant testimony to the frame of mind with which we started in one of those fragments which Mr. Halsey has ferreted out. It occurs in Edward Johnson's "Wonder-Working Providence of Sion's Saviour in New England" of 1642. "Further the Lord hath been pleased," he says, "to turn all the wigwams, huts, and hovels the English dwelt in at their first coming, into orderly, fair, and well-built houses, well-furnished, many of them." You may see the proof of this in the American Wing, going first into the room based on the kitchen of the Capen house, which was built in the seventeenth century at Topsfield, Mass. It is an affair of the baldest simplicity, but that simplicity is not rude; it is seemly and dignified. In the neighboring room, reproducing the parlor of the Hart house at Ipswich, the level of taste is slightly lifted. The "summer beam" is chamfered, taking on thereby a little more interest than attaches to its prototype, and above the fireplace there is a moulding on which a pattern of red and black hints at

an unexpected craving for color. When you get into the Hampton room, in which the walls are covered with the original New Hampshire panelling, you note an extraordinary progress in taste. Primitive as it is in epoch, this room nevertheless shows in its investiture, especially in a corner cupboard and in the panelled ceiling, a strong desire to overlay luxury upon comfort. The evolution goes on into the eighteenth century through a room from Portsmouth, Rhode Island, on this floor, and is continued through the remaining chambers on the lower floors until we reach a high pitch of sophistication. In all these developments, which I make no pretense of following step by step, for minute details would hopelessly exhaust my few pages, the derivation of Colonial craftsmanship from English sources is obvious. You feel it unmistakably in the furniture. It is the distinction of the American Wing that it is dedicated absolutely to work of native origin, but it forcibly brings out our early dependence in these matters upon the land from which we sprang. We were English in blood and in habit. We brought over the old Jacobean and Elizabethan chest or cabinet, and, when we lacked it, our carpenters and wood-carvers did their best to copy the old designs and the old style. I may cite here an apposite passage from Dunlap:

> The artists who visited the Colonies found friends and employers; they did not need protectors. They exchanged the products of their skill and labor for the money of the

rich, and received kindness and hospitality "in the bargain." Our first visitors were probably all from Great Britain; and none stayed long. The Pilgrims who sought refuge from oppression, and the other pioneers of colonization, had their thoughts sufficiently employed on the arts of necessity and the means of subsistence or defence. Their followers brought wealth and pictures and imported from *home* the articles of luxury and the materials for ornamental architecture. As wealth increased, art and artists followed; and as the effects of that freedom which the colonists enjoyed was felt native artists sprang up and excelled the visitors from the fatherland.

The interesting thing to get at here is the question of the Colonial point of view, whether it was consciously artistic or whether it regarded art as wholly related to that instinct for comfort and luxury to which I have alluded. Did that liking for what the English liked, and that disposition to cultivate the same style, flower in a definite appreciation of art as art? Mr. Halsey quoted in *The Bulletin* an advertisement published by John Smibert, who was a dealer as well as a painter in Boston, which points to the existence of the amateur. It runs:

> To be sold at Mr. Smiberts in Queen Street on Monday the 26th instant. A Collection of valuable Prints, engraved by the best Hands after the finest Pictures in Italy, France, Holland, and England. Some by Raphael, Michael Angelo, Poussin, Rubens, and others the greatest masters, containing a great variety of Subjects as History &c. Most of the Prints very rare and not to be met with except in private collections; being what Mr. Smibert collected in the above mentioned countries, for his own private use and improvement.

Mr. Halsey tells me, too, that buyers of prints in the old days were more than lavish, sometimes fairly spotting a wall with engravings. The American Wing happily refrains from reproducing this foible. Both its paintings and its prints are restrained in number. Its testimony is, notwithstanding, in confirmation of the significance of Smibert's advertisement. It is clear that the Forefathers liked to embellish their walls. You may see that also in the several rooms in the wing which are adorned with Chinese painted paper or with pictorial papers printed in France. Still, the picture for its own sake was long in coming into its own. The portrait, painted or engraved, is the characteristic thing, and that functioned primarily as a record, not as a source of sensuous pleasure.

Apropos of the sensuous note it is suggestive to observe the matter of color in the early American social fabric. I have glanced at the modest gleam of decoration in red and black over the mantelpiece in the reproduction of the Hart parlor. The rudimentary color-sense there manifested was bound to develop. It crops out more bravely in imported textiles, in hangings of painted cotton, and in velvet cushions. On the rush or wooden seats of some of the old chairs in the American Wing there are flung cushions of ruby or emerald velvet. The color sets off the furniture delectably to the modern eye, and I can imagine the pleasure it gave to the Colonial housewife, how it brought something jocund into an otherwise sober

interior. But musing in these rooms I have been greatly impressed by their sobriety. We are apt to think of the typical Colonial interior as an affair of brilliant white contrasted with glistening dark mahogany. That is a misinterpretation. In the seventeenth century panelling was left the natural color of the wood, without oiling or polishing, and when it was painted it was more often gray or blue or green. I don't think, by the way, that their tints, then or later, were particularly happy. On the contrary, some of those in the American Wing are interesting only for their fidelity to precedent. Intrinsically they are of a deadly bleakness, some of the coldest, most inartistic tints I ever saw. The panelling in the room from Woodbury, Long Island, for example, may have pleased the farmer for whom it was made, but if the color he saw was what we see — and there is no reason to doubt it — we may be sure that he stayed a farmer unillumined by any of the subtleties of art.

I don't think they were very subtle folk, these ancestors of ours. I don't think there was anything recondite about their æsthetic outlook at all. Indeed, it is an open question as to whether the word "æsthetic" had any great status in their vocabulary. As I have indicated, I do not see them as collectors in the strict sense, even though they had their occasional collections of prints and ceramics. I see them, rather, just as people of good breeding and consequent good taste. Art as the American Wing puts it before us,

art as it was brought over from England, and somewhat artlessly nurtured here, was wreaked upon nothing more nor less than social amenity. And in its very detachment from the *milieu* of the collector, the connoisseur, it kept itself free to strengthen the one quality which was to prove, æsthetically, our salvation. The seasoned collector pays a certain penalty for his rôle. It makes him a complex being and makes his taste eclectic. We began with a strong tincture of fairly classical simplicity, and the outstanding lesson of the American Wing is that it stayed with us for full two hundred years. We wax in sophistication as time goes on. We are susceptible to rococo influences now and then. (There is a piquant instance in the room with painted decorations on the second floor, brought from Marmion in Virginia.) But chiefly our sophistication finds its efflorescence in grace and elegance. Our good taste stands firm. Our restraint is unshaken. You can see our evolution in perhaps its most eloquent phases if you observe the big ballroom taken out of Gadsby's Tavern at Alexandria, Virginia, and the room from the Powel house in Philadelphia. To the former, I may note in passing, Washington came for his last birthnight ball, in 1798, riding over from Mount Vernon, only eight miles away. The Powel room is richer than the ballroom, serving to show how wealth asserted itself, but both have the same austere stateliness.

It is beautiful to see how the purity and reserve

in matters of style, which we have now to gain through education, were then practised by our craftsmen and their patrons quite naturally and as a matter of course. The visitor to the American Wing will see clearly enough, if he gives his mind to it, the idea, and the ideal there enshrined. He will see that the Forefathers liked as part of their measured, well-mannered mode of carrying themselves in the world a cool, serene, and handsome environment. They liked gracious lines, telling particularly in the delicately wrought mouldings of wainscot, panelling, and cornice. They liked a brilliant chandelier, a shining lustre. With high appreciation and always without extravagance, they welcomed Chippendale and Sheraton, and took to their hearts the architectural motives of Robert and James Adam. They were always without extravagance, I have said, and I repeat the words because they affirm a fastidiousness at the core of the subject. There was luxury in that old America beyond a doubt. When John Adams made a note of the dinner that he had at "Mr. Nick Boylston's" one winter night in 1766, he added these words: "Went over the house to view the furniture, which alone cost a thousand pounds sterling. A seat ft is for a nobleman, a prince. The Turkey carpets, the painted hangings, the marble tables, the rich beds with their crimson damask curtains and counterpanes, the beautiful chimney-clock, the spacious garden, are the most magnificent of anything I have ever seen."

Gorgeous it must have been to leave Adams so breathless, but it is certain that it had a fundamental simplicity infinitely removed from one of those exotic interiors in which your modern Mæcenas is lodged.

It is the key to the American Wing, this simplicity, and with it there goes a kind of beauty. Both elements pervade the whole broad scheme, the rooms as rooms and the pictures that they make of our earlier civilization. Moreover, the spirit of the place is exemplified again in those smaller objects which diversify and fill out the general design. Consider the pottery, the glass, and the silver, especially the silver. Our craftsmen were never more judicious or more suave than when they worked in silver. It is of the craftsmen, to tell the truth, more than of the artist in the ordinary acceptation of the term, that you think in the American Wing. American painting has its place here, but the portraits by Stuart, Peale, Trumbull, Morse, and so on are displayed less for themselves than as details. Though I am tempted to speak of some of these canvases, which represent some highly important painters, beginning with Strycker, and include some notable pieces in the Charles A. Munn bequest, it is the grand design which I am more concerned to emphasize. It has been carried out in the grand style. In a thousand ways the Metropolitan Museum has made itself indispensable to the nation, but never hitherto has it rendered a service so intensely national

in character. Americans need to know the soil in which the evolution of their art is rooted. Here, as in a laboratory, it is made plain to them. The wing has an educational value beyond measurement.

XXV

The American Business Building

XXV

THE AMERICAN BUSINESS BUILDING

Some man of imagination, half philologist and half poet, should give his mind to the renaming of the categories of architecture. These are, no doubt, accurately enough designated as they stand. When you talk of domestic or ecclesiastical architecture you know pretty well where you are, though it must be admitted, as regards the first, that there is a certain organic difference between a suburban bungalow and a house like Chatsworth. But what are you to do about that particular kind of architecture which has been developed by the business conditions in American life? It is called "commercial," and against that possibly convenient but nevertheless pinched and inadequate essay in nomenclature I disgustedly rebel. It takes no account of the particular and peculiarly artistic characteristics of the kind of building to which I wish in this survey to refer. Within a period of a scant thirty-five or forty years American architects have been tackling so-called "commercial" problems in a spirit of their own and with results unique in the world. They have taken one of the raciest aspects of the American genius and interpreted it in terms of beauty, producing a body of architecture meet for honorable description.

I want some word which will ally it not only to the things of the market-place but to the things of the soul, a word worthy of the new creative art which it represents, a word as spiritually indicative as "romantic" or "classical." This architecture is rooted in the most practical phase of our civilization, but you cannot call it a prosaic thing, for it has brought out a fairly inspired audacity in designers and it constitutes an achievement not only in ingenuity but in taste. Was there anything partaking of the ordinary nature of prose in the imagination of Cass Gilbert when he conceived the Woolworth Building? He had there, rather, the poetic inspiration of his life. Yet I dare say the questions that pressed upon him as he sat down to his plan began with the hard issues of engineering and embraced all manner of demands for those things that are summed up in the phrase "renting-space." Your "commercial" architecture misses its destiny if it does not "pay." The triumph of the American architect has consisted in his extorting from that obligation a type of architectural beauty.

It has all happened within the memory of living men. As recently as the eighties, in fact, they were still putting up terrible façades of cast iron, façades all the more terrible because they played ducks and drakes with the classical orders. But it was in that period, too, that the change began. It was a swift affair, part and parcel of that instinct for speed and mutability which is the very life-blood of the American people. We are

nothing if not rapid in our movements, and I recall with some chagrin an instance of this in the very chapter of evolution with which I am dealing here. It was in the eighties that McKim, Mead & White erected the Columbia Bank on the southeast corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street. The façade on the avenue was narrow, that on the street was long. The first stages were rusticated stone. Brick and terra-cotta carried up to the cornice. The design was that of a Florentine palazzo with loggias at the top, and it was a little gem, one of the gracefulest monuments the city ever possessed. Where is that building now? It was razed to make way for a broader structure about double its height. But if the reader wants to see how our renaissance in this field was begun he may happily still do so by looking at the building of the De Vinne Press, in Lafayette Street, which dates from 1881. The late Theodore L. De Vinne was himself a man of high ideals, a printer who took typography for what it is, one of the greatest of the arts; and when he set out to house his business he went to architects of distinction, to Babb, Cook & Willard. They made him a design which to this day proudly maintains a standard of beauty amid its commonplace surroundings. The building is beautiful in its true proportions, in its distribution of the apertures, in its fine lines, and in its expression of the strength and the simplicity befitting the purpose for which it was constructed. Consider the dignity and the positive charm

of this building and then ask if there is not something lacking in the designation of it as merely "commercial" architecture. Of course I'll admit that the designation is reasonable, but I repeat that I hanker after a phrase which would somehow transcend the signification of the term to which we are at present confined.

Work like that done in the De Vinne Building has been going on in the United States ever since; and I make not the smallest pretense of touching in these brief remarks upon anything like the generous proportion of the landmarks in our architectural progress which industry and business have developed all over the country. I can, instead, glance at only a few representative monuments. But those few have tremendous meaning. I don't think it would be possible to exaggerate the import of Russek's, formerly the Gorham Building, which Stanford White completed in 1906 — its intrinsic beauty and its influence upon American architecture. White built their marble Venetian palazzo for the Tiffanys at about the same time, and for artistic quality it is hard to choose between the two; but as the years have gone on and I have gazed with delight upon them both thousands of times, I have found myself more and more coming back to the gray stone walls of the old Gorham Building as making a masterpiece apart. Here, to begin with, was an inspiring problem: the housing of a business dedicated to one of the precious metals.

RUSSEK'S

FROM THE BUILDING BY McKIM, MEAD & WHITE

The building had to possess both weight and delicacy. A certain elegance was to preside over its bulk. White saw to that with unerring taste and felicity in the columns and arches with which he started, in the cornice surmounting them, and in the sculptured decoration he introduced. Then he struck the nicest balance in the four stories above them, using just the right restrained touch in his shallow pilasters at the corners, in his balconies, in the sills for the windows, and in the heraldic ornamentation crowning this part of the façade; and for his final stage he set his tall grilled windows between columns that support a deep and gloriously decorative cornice. The thing is superb and it has two especially outstanding merits. In the first place, it is original, a work of great personal style, a building unlike anything that had come before and unsurpassed since. Secondly, it is a consummate affirmation of the American genius, practical, contemporaneous, a perfect fulfilment of every-day utilitarian needs, a work of usefulness which is a work of beauty. Imagination boggles at the idea of our ever having to give up *this* building for a taller one.

The merely tall building will always be with us, but it is interesting to note that tallness by itself no longer has anything talismanic about it, is no longer an obsessing preoccupation — and this I say in spite of the fact that rumors about the vast building which is to take the place of the old Madison Square Garden promise a higher altitude than that of the Woolworth

Building. From the beginning, American architects have been feeling their way toward a mitigation of pure vertical dimensions. Years ago I heard a story of what John W. Root dreamed of when he and his partner, Dan Burnham, pioneering in the erection of skyscrapers, built one of their first compositions, I think it was the Monadnock Building in Chicago. He wanted to do something about the coloration of the simple façade which would simulate the upward rush of flame. Root would have made some interesting experiments, I imagine, if he had lived; he would have done something to romanticize the subject. As it happened, when Burnham went on alone he was sometimes grandiose, but only through sheer bulk; and if there is anything romantic about the Flatiron Building in New York it is an accidental imposition due to the eccentric nature of the site rather than to the expression of any emotion in the architect. Burnham did a great deal of distinguished work, but he did it, like most of his colleagues, within the rather rigid confines of an accepted formula. The difference between his régime and the new is defined very effectively by the Hanna Building in Cleveland, designed by Charles A. Platt. It is not so tall as the Flatiron, but it is tall enough. Like the Flatiron, it stands at a corner coming almost to a point; and though the two façades extend to a much greater breadth, the idea of the prow of a ship asserts itself as you stand on Euclid Avenue and study the great gray mass. This is one

of the major buildings in the country, subtly Renaissance in style but, like the old Gorham Building, possessing an essentially personal quality. As a mass it has great power, great force, and this is tinctured by a singular beauty in all the linear elements that lend relief to bulk and add charm to strength. It is an illustration of "commercial" architecture studied in the finest spirit, with warmth, delicacy, and flexibility.

The zoning laws came to lend aid to the architect in New York when they determined that a façade should be recessed above a certain height, and the city is already rich in examples of the taste and skill which which the new opportunity has been exploited. Our sky-line has entered upon a period of transformation during which almost any picturesqueness may be expected. I can cite no better design in illustration of this latest advance than that which Benjamin Wistar Morris gave us when he erected the Cunard Building at that point at which Broadway emerges from contact with Bowling Green. There is a noble landmark if ever there was one. He had in the firm and its great fleet an historic institution to commemorate, and he went about it matching heroic scale with a fairly majestic inspiration. The immense façade rests upon a rusticated base, with arches, columns, and cornice modifying its grimness; and it soars dizzily until it reaches the prescribed height, then recedes thrice until it reaches the roof. Twenty-five years

ago this problem would have bewildered an architect, and he would have been practically defeated by the task. Morris grappled with it out of a fund of originality, and — the all-important point — he saw his gigantic façade as a whole, refused to be baffled by his necessarily serried windows, and developed an organic unit of architectural interest and beauty. I don't wonder that our sublime British brethren, so patronizing in their reception of things like "the great American novel," forget to condescend when they are confronted by such an achievement as the Cunard Building. There is nothing like it anywhere else in the world, and I cannot too often point out that what makes such architecture impressive is not by any means its scale alone but the superimposition of beauty upon scale and the exact correspondence between these things and the needs of our time. Could anything be racier, more modern, more true? It is the American soul in architecture. We are a busy, hard-working people, clear-eyed and energetic, worshipping efficiency, tending instinctively to bigness in enterprise, and widely occupied not only in the piling up of money but in the spending of it with a well-nigh imperial gesture. You read it all in the might and splendor of a Cunard Building. There is momentary amusement in the reflection that here a British organization is subdued to the stuff in which it works. With its business as American as it is English, the Cunard Line adjusts its tradition to the New York environ-

ment, falls into step with our whole movement, and finds itself expressed in the terms of an intensely American architecture.

I do not mean that there are no gorgeous business buildings in England. The Cunard offices in Liverpool are not by any means negligible from an architectural point of view. But they are a flea-bite compared to the offices in New York. The observer will smile again if, as he enters the latter, he will let his mind revert to those canonical quarters with which, according to generations of English writers, the English business man has always been content. If, when you are writing a romance of life in London, you want to be impeccable as to your "local color" you know well enough what to do. Pursue your famous solicitor up a flight of creaking steps in a dingy little building, follow him down a dark passage, and, when you have placated a snuffy clerk in a poverty-stricken anteroom, come to speech with the great man among japanned boxes looking even more antique than they are in the light that filters dimly through unwashed windows. You are in the presence of the oracle of dukes. That, at all events, is what we have been led to believe, along with the circumstance that if an English millionaire sometimes functions in an office of the American style, he is as likely to be discovered in a den that would be repudiated by a small retail merchant in South Bend, Ind. Well, cherishing these memories, as I say, let the

reader visit the great hall in the Cunard Building. I verily believe that if a certain type of British business man were to do so he would fall in a fit. Almost you might be in the Vatican. The deep-domed chamber goes clear through to the back of the building. The walls are of mellow travertine. The domes rest on piers which are themselves pierced by arches, so that repeated swelling curves lighten the austerity of a hall well over 150 feet deep. On the walls there are huge maps of the Cunard routes, painted by Barry Faulkner, and on ceiling and pendentives Ezra Winter has brilliantly painted decorations reviving in an enchanting harmony the traditions of Raphael and Pinturicchio. This more than spacious room is Medicean in its stateliness and sumptuous character.

It will be remarked that in this apotheosis of "commercial" architecture the enhancement of the interior has kept pace with the creative development of the façade, and in this the banking business has played a distinctive part. Every one, I am sure, has noticed it, and I might cite evidence from almost any direction. What first impressed it upon me was not, to tell the truth, a design of spectacular dimensions, but a bijou of a bank designed by Cross & Cross for a branch of the Guaranty Trust Company at Madison Avenue and Sixtieth Street. It is much used by women, and though it is an absolutely businesslike place, it has the delicate, even exquisite, traits which would be sympathetic to its clientele. The depositor here might come

from her Adam drawing-room or from some such surroundings to the bank and not feel that she had stepped out of her atmosphere. The black-and-white scheme is as cool and serene as flawless taste could make it, and there is no detail anywhere that does not fit into the picture. The place has the finish of the proverbial Swiss watch. One would think that such a finish was only attainable in a building of limited dimensions, but, as I have indicated, the note of grandeur recurs again and again in the architectural development we are considering, and it strongly marks the work of the architects who have in some sort brought the subject to a culmination.

Thirty-odd years ago Philip Sawyer was a young architect in the office of McKim, Mead & White. So was Edward P. York. They did together some jobs of their own and sometime in the late nineties launched forth definitely as the firm of York & Sawyer. Later the partnership included Louis Ayres and L. M. Franklin, both likewise McKim men, and in still another partner, F. S. Benedict, they have a graduate from the office of Babb, Cook & Willard. It is perhaps worth noting that among the five there is a voice which occasionally remembers the accents of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, but the important point is denoted in my allusions to McKim and Babb. This younger force, in short, has been trained in the American tradition, its use of Italian Renaissance motives having been determined chiefly by experience at home. The style

which York & Sawyer have formed for themselves is a style pure and scholarly, spiritually classical but never academic or muscle-bound. It is embodied in buildings of many kinds and uses, all of them distinguished; but on this occasion I would pay tribute to these architects chiefly as designers of banks. Two of them in New York without question give to York & Sawyer a status incomparable here or abroad. One is the Bowery Savings Bank, on Forty-second Street just east of Park Avenue. The other is the Greenwich Savings Bank, the site of which stretches from Broadway to Sixth Avenue on Thirty-sixth Street. The façades in both cases are beautifully designed. The three of the Greenwich, of reasonable height, are purely classical, using the Corinthian order, with a simple attic rising above the columns. The Bowery is of Romanesque origin, and for all its historic derivation presents a very fresh and unconventional effect. You could not pass either building without an impulse of admiration. Enter either of them and you behold banking architecture *in excelsis*.

I have figured the surprise of the British business man seeing the Cunard Building for the first time. Downright stupefaction would overtake old Meyer Rothschild if the founder of that famous fortune could revisit the glimpses of the moon and pass into the building of the Bowery Savings Bank, memories clustering thick about him of his ancient and obscure Frankfort lair. "This isn't a banking-room," he

would exclaim in his bewilderment. "It is a hall belonging to a Roman Emperor." Only it *is* a banking-room, one brought to the highest point of everything that spells efficiency in banking processes. The room is 200 feet long and nearly 80 feet in width, but there isn't an inch of waste space in it. The network of compartments for the staff is islanded on the great marble floor, and around it the area for the circulation of the public is exactly proportioned to the scale of the whole. The ceiling, 65 feet high, looks down on a scene in which there is nothing haphazard but in which each detail has a function and completes a balance. The ceiling is itself richly decorated. It is borne by walls in which engaged columns of varied marbles support massive arches. All along on either side the walls are panelled in mosaic as discreet in tone as so much ivory. There is no undue emphasis anywhere. The columns, as I have said, are of different marbles, and with the same substance the floor is as richly bedight as that of many an Italian church. Gold gleams from the sculptured counter screen. The architects have had a perfect Sardanapalian debauch of marble and bronze, and in the walls themselves they have sought richness of surface, mixing Ohio sandstone with Indiana variegated limestone. It sounds of Byzantium. But it is sanely and magnificently of New York in 1925. These gifted men have always known when and how to restrain themselves, and they have painted their glowing picture so harmoniously that as the light

comes through wide expanses of amber glass at either end and falls through the lofty roof panes, one is first aware of it as adequate illumination and then delighted with the mellowness of its revelation. The room falls into one reposeful tone, like a chord of organ music.

Lovers of art make pilgrimages to see renowned pictures and cathedrals. I urge them to make a pilgrimage to this work of American architecture, and when they conclude, as I know they will, that they never saw a handsomer room, the thing for them to do is to go down to the Greenwich Savings Bank and to observe that there York & Sawyer have, if anything, surpassed themselves. Here again we have a room of noble dimensions, this time 120 feet long by 86 feet wide, with a coffered ceiling 72 feet high. Here again the staff works behind a counter screen islanded as in the bank further up-town. But this time the room is elliptical and the result is one of the most beautiful in the world. It gave me one of the most thrilling moments I have ever known in architecture. I had a fleeting impression as of a *tour-de-force*, I wondered if I had come upon just a daring "stunt." But the longer I pondered the design the more I realized how deeply studied it was. There are, of course, no columns here, save at the ends. The great curving walls rise in unfretted simplicity, unbroken save by a few shrewdly placed false windows, filled with pierced stone. Look at the individual things that go to make up this lovely

ensemble. Look at the floor, look at the mouldings, look at the very benches placed here and there against the walls and at the lighting fixtures, which reproduce the lines of some ornate Renaissance marvel in metal. Once more, as at the Bowery, the part plays into the hands of the unit, and in this case it goes to vitalize a conception at once massy and graceful, a thing of exultant strength and of beguiling charm. It is in the grand style and yet it makes a fairly intimate appeal. While you are impressed by those antique wall surfaces you are joyously uplifted by the flowing line of the ellipse.

How buoyantly and masterfully American it is! What a stir of creative energy these eloquent walls proclaim! Those who care for American architecture must rejoice when they see a room like this, a room genuinely worthy of the school to which McKim gave such impetus when he built the Pennsylvania Terminal. And it springs straight from the core of our national life, straight from the fundamental sources of the American genius. That is the exciting thing about our "commercial" architecture. It expresses what we do and what we are in one of our most characteristic fields of endeavor. It is full of our spirit, of our imagination. Does the reader wonder at my wanting a word, a phrase, which would do new honor to this new growth in our art?

XXVI

American Industrial Art

XXVI

AMERICAN INDUSTRIAL ART

Furniture — if I may risk a figure that through the association of ideas might seem a little absurd — furniture is in the air. So is wall-paper. So is silverware and so are window hangings. In fact, all the appointments of a well-regulated American home are being discussed as they never were before. The American home is being made over, and the interesting thing about the transformation is that it is proceeding not on an artistic impetus alone, in the strict sense, but from the adjustment of the practical and mechanical genius of the country to ends both artistic and commercial. How irrelevant that last word must sound in the ear of the dilettante and how wholesomely apposite it really is! Undoubtedly, when Benvenuto Cellini fashioned the great saltcellar at Vienna he made it beautiful because he loved his craft, but he did the best he could with it, too, because he was "filling a job."

It is possible to be too romantic, too sentimental, about the ideals of the craftsmen of the past. Good art in industry has always been a matter of good business, and disciplinary pressure from without has been pretty nearly as important as inspiration surging from within. I do not doubt that when Oeben and

Riesener labored across the years on the prodigious desk in the Louvre they had a salutary consciousness of the fact that they were carrying out a commission for the King. In short, artists though they were, they had a sense of trade responsibility. It is an ancient faith. Observe, in M. Saglio's concise summary, the rule of law followed by the mediæval French *huchiers*, or cabinetmakers:

> No one could aspire to the title of a master cabinetmaker who had not served an apprenticeship of six years, at the end of which he would have to submit to an examination before a selected jury, and be called upon to execute in the house of one of them, without any assistance, a masterpiece on some prescribed theme that should test to the uttermost his power of dealing successfully with the difficulties of his profession. The manufacture of any furniture in wood except in the licensed *ateliers* was strictly forbidden, as was also the buying or selling of anything produced elsewhere. To set against these restrictions, master cabinetmakers were bound to send forth none but work of the highest quality, alike of material and execution; it must all be in *bon bois loyal et marchand*, under penalty of having anything inferior publicly burned before their doors, and having to pay a fine of ten crowns.

Now it would of course be appropriate to dilate upon the artistic conscience of the cabinetmaker here suggested, appropriate and just. But do not let us forget his solicitude for his bill. He knew perfectly well that if that was to be cheerfully and promptly paid it would be because he had satisfied a customer, met an obligation in the open market.

I keep the economic aspect of the subject in mind because it has made so deep an impression upon me when I have seen at the Metropolitan Museum in New York the remarkable exhibitions of American industrial art organized there. They are exhibitions of beautiful things, and what makes them significant is their representation of that intensely American factor in modern life, quantity production. They form a series of shows having a certain historical status. The American craftsman is no new type. We have had our famous pioneers in carpentry and cabinetmaking, in glass and pewter, and so on. Paul Revere is remembered not only for his historic ride but for his silverware. There are collectors who specialize with something like religious passion in the furniture of Duncan Phyfe. In 1909, when the Metropolitan Museum held its great exhibition commemorative of the tercentenary of the discovery of our river by Henry Hudson and the centenary of Fulton's first use of steam in its navigation, a goodly proportion of the space was given to early American furniture and utensils. These things could not promote the revival, out of hand, of Colonial ideas and types of craftsmanship, but they did have a constructive influence. They had some effect upon style in current manufacture and they had more in setting people thinking. They have been thinking ever since, and this is where the Museum again comes in.

Recognizing in the most liberal spirit the force of

that clause in its charter which dedicates it, among other things, to "the application of art to manufacture," it has for many years steadily developed its collections of industrial art. More recently it has actively pursued the subject in those administrative ways which can do so much to make an institution of tangible service in the community. It has done everything possible to encourage the practical student. It has lent all the facilities in the world to the designer and manufacturer. An extraordinarily rich library has been placed at their disposal, to reinforce the aid embodied in the collections. An efficient staff has always been on the spot to lend willing co-operation, and in 1918 one of its members, Mr. Richard F. Bach, was appointed Associate in Industrial Arts to preside over the department and in every way to further its usefulness. He frequents shops, factories, and designing-rooms, knows machinery as well as men, and in the presence of a brocade or a cretonne or a wall-paper, to cite only one or two examples, can tell you how the thing was made and exactly what progress it stands for in the history of its particular craft. The Museum not only has an amazing number of trade papers in its files but keeps in touch with their editors. It welcomes the manufacturer, and the manufacturer, it is good to know, responds with growing enthusiasm, though it would be, perhaps, too much to say that the trade *in toto* is as yet aware of what art can do to bring culture and commercialism together. The modern

manufacturers have not by any means renewed the solidarity of those mediæval *huchiers* to whom I have alluded. Some of them harbor jealousies of their rivals. Some of them are fearful of exhibiting outside their own warerooms an object of their making; they shiver at the thought of the possible snooping of one of their ideas. The middleman, that portentous phenomenon, is occasionally an obstructionist. There are, indeed, divers reactionary elements with which the Museum has to reckon. But the good work has gone on in spite of them.

Seven or eight years ago the Museum opened in a small way an exhibition of manufactures based on study of the collections. Annually this demonstration has been repeated, always increasing in scope, until, in 1922, the largest single gallery in the building, the familiar one reserved for special exhibitions, was assigned to the purpose. There were twenty-six exhibitors in the first year, thirty-seven in the second, seventy-eight in the third, and so on through a scale always rising. Hundreds of pieces are now shown. Hitherto the policy of the Museum has adhered to the point that all of the work shown should be work influenced by study of its collections. This was a reasonable and desirable attitude. It was important for the Metropolitan to affirm the nature and value of its resources—as Mr. Bach has expressed it in *The Bulletin*, to broadcast Museum usefulness to the manufacturer, "on the wings of commerce and along the crowded

channels of sale and purchase." Nothing could do this better than an annual collection of objects giving the most tangible possible of evidences of contact with the collections. I have followed the shows from the beginning and have seen the remarkable growth they have registered.

It has been a mixed growth, and I cannot forbear deviation here into a curious phase in the development of American taste. That taste, after all, must have a lot to do with the proceedings of the manufacturer; and he has been seriously affected by our cult for Europe. It is a cult that under the right hands may promote exquisite emulation of a Renaissance Italian interior, French or English precedent, or under the wrong hands it may bring about nothing more than the accumulation of exotic and expensive junk. There is the classical anecdote of the lady who was showing her new house to a friend and opened a door, saying: "This is our Louis Quinze room." Quoth the visitor: "What makes you think so?" I remember an eighteenth-century French room "somewhere in the United States," a little affair in Reckitt's blue and chalk-white. It added a new shudder to life. One sees an "Italian" drawing-room sometimes that looks like nothing on earth so much as a hotel lobby. I have detected some reverberations from that meretricious world in the exhibitions at the Museum. At any rate, they have indicated a marked dependence upon the historic model, not so much emulation as imitation.

But a change has been going on all the time, and the exhibition of 1924 took memorable account of it. It released the manufacturer from any obvious alliance with the Museum collections, permitting him to submit objects simply of American design and manufacture, with emphasis on the point that they illustrated quantity production. This last term was interpreted to mean either the production of many identical pieces at one time from a single design or the production of identical pieces from time to time according to the same original model or pattern. Finally, I must note that the exhibition was restricted absolutely to work falling within the year 1923. The subject was thus brought up to date in the fullest possible sense. The public was shown on a large scale what I may call the high lights in American industrial art.

It is the broad illumination they cast rather than their character in detail that concerns me here, but I confess it is tempting to pause upon a few specific items. I simply can't resist the temptation to pay a passing tribute to one man whose memory the show brought back to me, the late Edward F. Caldwell, one of the most charming artists I ever knew. I used to know him in the old days when he designed fixtures in the firm known, I think, as the Archer-Pancoast Company. He used to do things for Stanford White. White had a wonderful way of attracting the best workers. If he designed a panelled room, it was executed for him by the old Austrian Joseph Cabus,

one of the finest cabinetmakers we ever had. His houses were painted by John Sarre, who came from the Isle of Guernsey, and brought a marvellous French touch to his work. When White was looking for fixtures he went to Caldwell, and there was simply nothing that Caldwell could not do. He knew all the historical styles, and he had invention of his own. Thirty years ago he made chandeliers that are beautiful works of art to this day. He started a business of his own, and this firm, Edward F. Caldwell & Company, splendidly carries on the tradition it owes to him. In one of the exhibitions I have in mind, it illustrated his principle of doing many things well. It sent andirons and a fire-screen, and offered, besides, the appointments for a desk, boxes, and so on, done daintily in "Battersea" enamel. In the one instance you had strength, in the other delicacy, and in both you had good design. That was Caldwell all over. It would have tickled him if he could have lived to see the idea which he followed in rather lonely fashion now being recognized by an ever-growing company. There were other things recalling his tradition at the Museum. One of them was a chandelier of hammered pewter and brass, designed by Walter W. Kantack, and made by his firm, Kantack, Heath & Warman. It was a shining example of what has come over American manufacture, the vitalizing of old European idioms of style in work so sound and so beautiful that you had no thought of mere imitation

but were simply conscious of the American designer and craftsman falling naturally into step with their predecessors and taking beauty in their stride.

There is surely no reason why they should be original at the expense of immemorial convention. That way there often lies nothing but strained fantasticality. I remember the splash that was made in the Salon by the French craftsman Carabin. No wonder he got himself noticed! He would carve a goblin atop a chair-back or reveal him climbing up over the edge of a table. Then the craze for *l'art nouveau* set in and furniture abroad looked more or less like the notorious "Nude Descending a Staircase." In the earlier exhibitions at the Museum there were repetitions, as I have said, of established motives, but, thank heaven, there were no freaks. There wasn't even the ghost of one in the eighth show, the show of 1924. It was sane, conservative, a model of good taste. Did it disclose anything like genius? Hardly that. A William Morris turns up only once in a generation. There are some wall-papers of his that have never been rivalled. In design and in color he made them fairly superb. Yet there were some fascinating wall-papers at the Metropolitan, shown by fully a dozen firms. And in the textile field our American manufacturers need hardly fear comparison with Morris. The makers of rugs and velvets, tapestries and damasks, cretonnes and silks came magnificently into the foreground in a group so large and imposing that I do not pretend to enumerate

its members. All I can do is to render homage to the beauty of their fabrics, the sound design in them, and the high character of their manufacture.

The matter of design inevitably first attracts attention, and this is a matter which is being taken more and more seriously. A recent incident makes this manifest. Not long ago Mr. Michael Friedsam, of the Altman firm, offered to the Architectural League an Art and Industry Medal to be awarded annually to the man doing most to apply artistic ideals to commercial production in America. This golden tribute, which Mr. Friedsam proposes to maintain in perpetuity, was bestowed for the first time upon Mr. Henri Creange, who as Art Director of Cheney Brothers has had an immense influence upon the creation of beauty in their fabrics. I saw the result of his activity at the Museum show and I have observed it elsewhere. The Cheneys have done enchanting things, and it is patent that they could not have done them to the same extent without Mr. Creange. In industrial art, as in painting or sculpture, you are always coming back to the individual, and there the subject involves a grave problem. In his invaluable report on "Art in Industry," a volume indispensable to the investigator, Mr. Charles R. Richards has among his "Conclusions" a significant passage. "We must have better designers," he says; "not that we have not good designers in the art industries to-day, but we have not enough of the highest training or capacity to meet the advancing

demand. Our manufacturers in certain industries go to France and other countries for their best designs, not because they can thus obtain them more cheaply, not even because of the prestige of Paris, but because they can find there better designs." Mr. Richards places the emphasis upon the need for more training. He says that only a minority of the designers in our art industries have received this aid to development. It is in the hands of the art schools to a large extent, but episodes like the exhibitions at the Museum have a strong contributory influence, and the pioneer work done at the Metropolitan has been more extended throughout museums elsewhere in the country than can be indicated within the limits of this brief essay. American industrial art has still much to achieve, but it has already fixed itself on the map.

It must be constrained, no doubt, to recognize the fact that it has more to learn than to teach in respect to design. But where manufacture is concerned it may safely take a bolder stand. I have touched on the subject of "quantity production." It not only means the taste of industrial art in America but means also our national traits of energy and ingenuity. The enthusiast for taste, for purely æsthetic issues, may wince a bit when you tell him that the lovely things at the Museum, the films of lace, the exquisite silver and glass, the handsome furniture, the bewitching cretonnes, represented the triumph of America's mechanical genius. But that, in cold blood, is precisely what it did; and in

that, to my mind, lies the hope of American industrial art. You cannot expect a race that applied the steel-cage principle to the building of the skyscraper to function in the mood and manner of a mediæval craftsman. Now and then some individual may arise in whose bosom there glows the old fire. Invariably, when I go to an exhibition of the Architectural League, one of the first things I do is to see what has been done by Samuel Yellin. That masterly worker in wrought metal is a Renaissance artisan born out of his time. I can conceive of Yellin as the leader of a group, the founder of a school, and I would be grateful for such an eventuality. But he would make a great mistake who, in appreciation of the maker of a single beautiful object, would sniff at beautiful objects perfectly produced by machinery in large quantities. Make no mistake about it, they spell delightfully one of the finest, most genuine impulses of the American soul. To undervalue them would be like undervaluing the railroad, the reaper, the Hoe press, the telephone, and the flying machine. When I think of American industrial art as I have seen it at the Museum and remember that, thanks to the machinery behind it, it was meant not for the connoisseur alone but for the multitude, I feel that I have been in the presence of a truly vital expression of American life.

XXVII

The Centenary of George Inness

XXVII

THE CENTENARY OF GEORGE INNESS

The story of American landscape-painting has a peculiar interest because it constitutes the most decisively national achievement of our school. I have a particular reason for returning to it. George Inness was born at Newburgh on May 1, 1825. In commemoration of his centenary the Macbeth Gallery in New York City arranged in the spring of 1925 a loan exhibition of about thirty of his works, ranging from the sixties to his last period. It was a well-chosen, fairly representative collection, a good illustration of the art of Inness. I rejoiced in it for its own sake, and it set me to thinking about the whole development of American landscape art. It is a subject for which I have a special predilection, for it is one affirming the American genius in extraordinary fulness and brilliance. In our earlier history, when we were learning how to paint, we got our first impetus from the British tradition of the eighteenth century, and adjusted that tradition specifically to problems of portraiture. Our first efforts to deal with the subject-picture remain, critically speaking, almost negligible. I have sometimes wondered if our nearness at that

time to the ideas of Puritanism did not have something to do with it. Such ideas, still lingering in the air, may possibly have slowed up the attack upon that study of the nude which bears so heavily upon the treatment of the figure. The thought persists despite the essays in the nude which can be discerned here and there in our formative period. In any case, the fact remains that the significant disciples of nature in the pioneering phase of American art are those who sought their inspiration in field and forest.

They were not, to tell the truth, the most exciting types in the world! Thomas Doughty, born in 1793, Asher B. Durand, born in 1796, were distinctly wanting in the creative fire so indispensable to the founders of an authentic school. It seems sometimes as if their names had been conclusively submerged, and with them the names of men like Kensett and McEntee, Whittredge and Bierstadt, S. R. Gifford and F. E. Church. But I wish the people who hold this view would now and then, just out of old loyalty, go to the Metropolitan Museum and renew the impressions which the Hudson River men are there to convey. No doubt they are impressions of a dry, pinched, and altogether too literal reproduction of the given subject. But these pictures are also exemplars of honest workmanship, of judicious composition, of sound and sometimes graceful drawing. They are allied to our earlier and more successful portraiture by a certain rectitude which was in itself well calculated to give a

measure of stimulus to the evolution of a better movement. It is customary and reasonable to ascribe their failure to assert themselves more effectively to the insufficient store of ideas behind them. It is convenient and not unfair to say that we needed acquaintance with the new outlook and the new methods brought into play around 1830 by the painters of France. Of course Barbizon set a new beacon by which we were in due course bound to profit. But the crux of the matter resided, as it always does, in the question of personality. Everything in art depends upon the calibre of the artist. Consider, for example, the case of Homer Martin, born in 1836. He was a pupil of William M. Hart, and when he began was not only conversant with the Hudson River methods but whole-heartedly employed them. Yet Martin, having intensely that gift which we call temperament, presently emerged from under the handicaps of his pupilage and painted some of the things most exquisite and most modern in American landscape. Genius does the trick. It did it for George Inness.

Everything about his career points to the power of originality in him. In the biography written by his son occurs this statement of the precocity of his aspirations toward art:

> In speaking of his aims and ambitions, my father once told me that his desires first began to crystallize when, as a very little chap, he saw a man painting a picture out in a field. Immediately a responsive chord was struck,

and his own nebulous groping for self-expression became at once a concrete idea. Then and there he made up his mind that when he grew up he would be a painter. He told me that he thought it the most wonderful thing in the world to make with paint the things that he saw around him, clouds, trees, sunsets, and storms, the very things that brought him fame in later years. He told me with what awe he viewed the difficulty of getting a piece of paper big enough, for he thought that to paint a landscape one had to have a paper as large as the scene itself — a thought as naïvely conceived as it was expressed.

With these emotions seething in his bosom he had to reckon with a father who was kind and generous, but whose belief in the virtues of a mercantile career led him to set the lad up, at the age of fourteen, as proprietor of a little grocery-store in Newark! But almost immediately he escaped from that and was placed under the instruction of an artist in the town, named Barker, who in a few months had taught him about drawing and painting all that he had to teach. His son says that a little later he did some work in an engraver's office, but was not interested, and shortly entered the studio of Regis Gignoux in New York. There is also mention of his susceptibility to certain old masters in engravings casually encountered in a print-shop. In after years he could not remember just what the pictures were, but he could not forget their broad lesson. "There was a power of motive, a bigness of grasp in them," he said. "They were nature, rendered grand instead of being belittled by trifling detail and puny execution. I began to take them out with me

to compare them with nature as she really appeared, and the light began to dawn." That light stayed by him all his life long, and with it there was fused a remarkable inner illumination. "The true use of art," he was wont to say, "is, first, to cultivate the artist's own spiritual nature. . . . The true artistic impulse is divine."

This is an appropriate point at which to pause upon the nature of the man. He thought much and could talk well, but I should say that he was an emotional and mystical type rather than an intellectual. That naïveté to which his son alludes in the anecdote of his boyhood was never quite lost. He seems, indeed, naïveté itself when you compare him with a contemporary of his like the lettered, philosophical, sophisticated La Farge. I can find no traces in his biography of what is surely untraceable in his works — anything like exhaustive examination of historic schools or academic organization of ideas. Something like the latter might perhaps be identified in some of his letters or sayings, and, of course, as a technician he knew what he was about, following a reasoned method. But his thought as thought, in such specimens of it as have come my way, has always seemed to me to be impulsive and a little confused by his mysticism. An instance of his intellectual crudity is supplied in a letter of his on one of the most momentous developments in modern painting, a letter from which I take the following passages:

I am sorry that . . . I have come to be classed as a follower of the new fad, "impressionism." . . . Every fad immediately becomes so involved in its application of its want of understanding of its mental origin, and that the great desire of people to label men and things, that one extreme is made to meet with the other in a muddle of unseen life application. And as no one is long what he labels himself, we see realists whose power is in a strong poetic sense, as with Courbet. And impressionists who from a desire to give a little objective interest to their pancake of color, seek aid from the weakness of pre-Raphaelism, as with Monet — Monet, made by the power of life through another kind of humbug. For when people tell me that the painter sees nature in the way the Impressionists painted, I say "Humbug!" from the lie of intent to the lie of ignorance.

On another occasion, alluding to this same bugbear of impressionism, he declares that he is down on all that sort of thing, characterizing such "fads" as shams. I could quote further specimens of what seems like nothing more nor less than a hopeless obscurantism, but it is unnecessary to do so or to linger over the subject. I touch upon it only to point the fact that Inness was not precisely a thinker. He was, instead, all imagination and emotion, all eye and hand. His essential attitude he thus illuminatingly expressed, referring to a practice begun at the outset of his career: "I would sit down before nature, and under the impulse of a sympathetic feeling, put something on canvas more or less like what I was aiming at. It would not be a correct portrait of a scene, perhaps, but it would have a charm. . . . When I tried to do

my duty and paint faithfully I didn't get much; when I didn't care so much for duty I got something more or less admirable." Add to this his passion for nature, his insight into her moods, and you have some idea of the equipment that he took with him when his friend Ogden Haggerty, an auctioneer in New York, enabled him to go abroad not long after his marriage in 1850, when he was still in his twenties. He painted and studied the old masters in Italy for two years. He remained here as long on his return from abroad, but in 1854 was on his travels again, this time working much in France. There followed a long American period, but once more in the seventies he was under foreign skies. The remainder of his career down to his death, in 1894, was spent in this country. The biography contains one interesting fragment on his contact with the Barbizon school, so interesting that I must quote it intact:

As landscape-painters I consider Rousseau, Daubigny, and Corot among the very best. Daubigny particularly and Corot have mastered the relation of things in nature one to another, and have obtained the greatest works, representations more or less nearly perfect, though in their day the science underlying impression was not fully known. The advance already made is that science, united to the knowledge of the principles underlying the attempt made by those artists, will, we may hope, soon bring the art of landscape-painting to perfection. Rousseau was perhaps the greatest French landscape-painter, but I have seen in this country some of the smaller things of Corot which appeared to me to be truly and thoroughly spon-

taneous representations of nature, although weak in their key of color, as Corot always is. But his idea was a pure one and he had long been a hard student. Daubigny also had a pure idea, and so had Rousseau. There was no affectation in these men, there were no tricks of color. But the trouble with Rousseau was that he has too much detail. He's little, he's twopenny. He's little with detail, and that takes away from his artistic worth.

From that fantastically inept "twopenny" allusion it is clear enough that he was no docile pupil sitting at the feet of the great Frenchmen, and I do not think it could be said that he was at any time definitely subject to their influence. But it is undeniable that the whole European experience was beneficial. It broadened him and it steadied him, and I think especially his broodings on French and Italian soil strengthened him in the art of mere picture-making. His earliest paintings show a minutely close analysis of detail. It is obvious from landscapes like his "Juniata River," or his "Berkshire Hills," or his "Nook Near Our Village," that he could not throw off the pressure of the Hudson River tradition all at once. But in Europe finally he did completely reject it, gaining at great strides in largeness and freedom. The big monumental "Barberini Pines," in the Metropolitan Museum, shows perhaps most conspicuously what he drew from the classical environment that he found in Italy, but I remember a little "Albano" of his that is even more eloquent of his growth. The composition is perfect — a foreground with no great incident, a

bridge in the middle distance, and then beyond that the gleaming town on its hill. And I recall it, too, as a superb piece of painting, the brushwork vigorous and explicit, the handling a blend of force and delicacy that could have been matched only by Corot. It is the *maestria* of this "Albano" that henceforth characterizes Inness, only waxing stronger as time goes on, until at his full maturity he worked like the authoritative conductor of a magnificent orchestra.

He was a great colorist. A blazing sky appealed to him as a stirring theme appeals to a virtuoso. But even while it wrought him up to a high pitch of enthusiasm he held his hand and kept his picture on the safe side of merely sensuous improvisation. Creative frenzy was thus governed by him in whatever key he painted. His impulsiveness, it is true, sometimes led him into strange ways with a canvas. Dissatisfied with a perfectly good design, he would proceed to "tickle it up," and not infrequently this meant the complete transmogrification of it. He was capable of turning a landscape into a marine overnight, and the client who wanted to be sure of the picture he bought did well to carry it off on the spot, before the artist had a chance to "improve" it. But the important thing to remember is that the truth of nature never suffered from any of the changes which he was so often tempted to make. His memory was a veritable anthology of the things of the visible world. He was largely, I gather, a studio painter, but no resolute

open-air man ever beat him in fundamental veracity. I do not think that any modern landscape-painter, either of the Barbizon school or any other, has surpassed him in truth, in beauty, and in that stamp of individual genius which gives artistic immortality to both.

It is a large saying, but I do not hesitate to make it, for I have a deep sense of the splendor in his work, its note of organic creative strength. From the thirty pictures at the Macbeth Gallery my memory travelled over thrice that number more, and I had a vivid sense of the might and scope of this great painter. There was a wonderful amplitude about his genius, a wonderful energy. He poured forth his designs in glorious profusion, and they have rich substance, an abounding vitality. It was in America, too, that he brought his art to a climax, during the eighties and the early nineties. He is our own man, his roots going down deep into our own soil. His landscapes are among the raciest, most characteristic things American art has given us. They most faithfully depict the American scene, and they enrich it with the beauty that only art could give to it. They do this, curiously, in spite of the fact that he was not one of the sublimest technicians that ever lived. The "twopenny" Rousseau could easily have taught him something about the drawing of trees, and from the Barbizon men generally he might have learned something about the definition of textures. Yet against his limitations in

technic there must be set the circumstance that he had an uncanny way of getting the effect that he wanted. I remember some water-colors of his done on the Italian border beneath the shadow of the Alps. Grandiose ground-forms were sketched in them, with a feeling for structure reminding one of the drawings of Turner. I go back to that saying of his: "The true artistic impulse is divine." He had it and had it so supremely that the niceties of manual dexterity never, after all, troubled him very much. With his vision he could afford to be a little careless of technic.

I have spoken of the exhibition of his works as reviving the question of American landscape art at large. It does not do so in the sense of drawing attention to a master and a school. Inness did not rear up a large company of pupils. But he did leave an ineffaceable mark because he left American landscape better than he found it, fixed it in a new status, and inculcated by example a new point of view. It would be false and unjust to say that he did this single-handed. Wyant counted in ushering in a new régime. Homer Martin counted. So did Winslow Homer. But for George Inness it was reserved to illustrate the modern hypothesis of landscape-painting with an energy, a brilliance, an individuality, and, I repeat, a splendor, giving him unique salience. His influence might seem to have been curtailed by the rise in this country of that very impressionistic movement which he so mistakenly contemned. Many of

his juniors, including some of our best painters, gladly and profitably derived from Claude Monet the aid which he disdained. But their interest in problems of light constituted, in a sense, a detail. Broadly speaking, it was from George Inness that they took over the point of view, the habit of mind, typical of American landscape art in the last thirty years and more. If the old methods of the Hudson River school are no longer valid, if the "natural magic" that now holds sway is one concerned in utter freedom with the everlasting truths of light and air and color, if our painters and their public explore the intimacies of nature in a spirit of sympathy and understanding, it is largely because Inness found the key to a more beautiful world. He accustomed us to a different kind of landscape, and he established it as the right one. He liberated us from an inadequate tradition and gave us a new standard to live by. Only a man of genius could have done it.

XXVIII

J. Alden Weir

XXVIII

J. ALDEN WEIR

It is a testimony to the vital qualities which go to the making of American art that whenever a memorial exhibition is held at the Metropolitan Museum it brings forward work of an intensely personal significance. Consider what similar affairs might mean, say, in Paris. Man after man, no matter how distinguished, would affirm his solidarity with the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, with the Salon. Here it is different. A Winslow Homer stands absolutely by himself. So does an Abbott Thayer. So does a George Fuller. They are among the pillars of our school, yet they are in no wise school types. The same reflection was evoked by the exhibition opened at the museum in honor of the late Julian Alden Weir in 1924. Like so many of our artists, he received his early training in France, and for a time his work gave the clearest possible evidence of that circumstance. But in the long run, when he had got into his own stride, he became utterly American. Looking back over these memorial episodes at the museum, noting their differences and yet the essential unity for which they have stood, I realize anew what it is that especially marks our art. It is the quality of genuineness, of a thing fresh and unspoiled by excess of sophistication. The school is held together as a

school not by a formula, but by the strength of its various individualities.

If we have ever had a born artist it was Alden Weir. When he went to Paris in the early seventies, a young man of twenty-one, it was inevitable that he should have formed himself more or less upon his master, Gérôme. But it is important to observe that he did so in a spirit so little imitative that he stated his loyalty to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in matters of principle, not through the narrower implications which you identify in a style deliberately fashioned. He didn't copy Gérôme. He learned from him the virtues of good drawing, good composition, good workmanship generally. With this equipment he was prepared to go on, in readiness for the moment when he would say what he had to say in his own way. Meanwhile he found an inspiring comrade in Bastien-Lepage. "We loved Bastien for his honesty, his truth, and his sincerity," he said long afterward. The words he chose to designate the power in his friend are the words to apply to Weir himself.

Bastien's liberalism doubtless hastened his alienation from what was rigidly scholastic in Gérôme, but, despite the dangers of speculation as to what might have been, I am confident that Weir would in any case have moved on from an academic to a personal point of view. It couldn't have been otherwise, considering the progressive, inquiring mind he had. He was from the beginning that rare type, the thinking

artist, the painter whose exercise of the brush is energized by æsthetic culture. Though he had a lot of manual dexterity, he was far from resting his art upon dexterity alone. It is important to remember that he didn't slavishly emulate Bastien-Lepage any more than Gérôme. He was simply stimulated by the one as he had been stimulated by the other, and in the period of his pupilage the old masters also contributed to his growth. He sat at the feet of Velasquez in Spain, he studied Rembrandt and Hals in Holland, and when the French Impressionists came into his view, revolutionists with the novelty of their crusade still upon them, he found in them too something to his own profit. And always he stayed Weir, the born artist bent upon his own evolution.

It would be foolish to assert that this singularity of his immediately declared itself in triumphant terms. The most golden of talents has, of course, to mature. To look at the "Idle Hour," which has been in the Metropolitan ever since Weir painted it, in 1888, is to look at a good but not in any way masterly picture of the old Salon type. But even so, it has a curious vitality; you would know it anywhere for the work of a man of great promise. There is an earlier painting of his in the same rather conventional vein which perhaps more vividly exposes his ingrained ability. It is the beautiful "Muse of Music," which dates from 1884. It may have been thanks to Gérôme that the simple pose was so well handled, with such an ad-

mirable feeling for design, and that such good draftsmanship went to the definition of the form and the draperies. But the subtle atmosphere of distinction enveloping the thing is pure Weir. It is, again, his thoughtful mood operating upon the purely technical elements in his task. It is, especially, his emotion, his quick tendency to see a subject finely, beautifully. None of the men who made the early history of the Society of American Artists had a broader conception of the painter's function, and, in fact, there were few of them with whom it was so broad. "Art for art's sake" was the slogan in those days. The revolt against the Academy was all in favor of better painting. Weir added to technical ambition the impulse of the poet that was somewhere concealed in his cosmos.

It was at that time that he painted some of his exquisite essays in still life, studies of flowers grouped with objects in porcelain or metal. He could paint a rose with a magical touch that no one else has had save John La Farge and Maria Oakey Dewing. He could express the very last essence of fragility and evanescent loveliness in the form and texture of a petal. Weir's flowers, indeed, occupy a place apart in the body of his work. They are the outstanding souvenirs of his tenderness, his delicacy, his interpretation of beauty as a factor in art half ponderable and half spiritual. There was, it may be repeated, a poet in him. Not, however, in the inventive sense that the term sometimes connotes. His emotions, his imagina-

tion, could not but be stirred by beauty, and ultimately in his dealings with landscape he would drift now and then into a markedly subjective frame of mind. But if he had any dreams of a dramatic nature he kept them to himself. The "Muse of Music" prefigured no further symbolism in his work. Run over the titles of his works. A few of them point to the human interest, the sentiment, which infrequently engaged him — "Children Burying a Bird," for example — and once he painted a mythological subject, "Pan and the Wolf." In the main he was content with the observant rôle of that familiar type in modern art, the man for whom the visible world exists.

He was always that, always a faithful recorder of the fact, yet with his individuality he could not for the life of him have remained a prosaic realist. His numerous portraits of women, young women set in some decorative arrangement, steadily confirm the point. He pretended to no psychological interest in them. He painted not Miss X, but "The Gray Bodice," "The Black Hat," "A Lady with a Venetian Vase," "Peacock Feathers," and so on. It did not matter. From every one of these canvases there exhales a fragrance, a charm, which denotes a vision as well as a tangible truth. While he kept his eye on the object that sensitive mind of his was at work, recognizing impalpable beauty and translating it into form and color. For years, I have watched these

apparitions in the exhibitions of the Ten and elsewhere. They varied in their approach to the painter's ideal. For some obscure reason pigment appears to have turned more or less intractable under Weir's fingers when he was otherwise on the crest of the wave. The rich and suave tonality which he had formerly obtained as a matter of course would now and then, in the most capricious manner, give place to a surface distinctly cold and harsh. With a heavier impasto something of his more transparent beauty, the beauty that was in his roses, would strangely elude him. But even at his coldest his portraits of women had distinction.

In landscape he had a far more uniform success, after he had once conquered the problems to which the impressionistic hypothesis directed him. It is vain to regret that an artist of Weir's achievements did not restrict them to a certain field, but it is legitimate to surmise that if he had dedicated himself to landscape alone he would have won a rank akin to that of George Inness. As it was, he approached his great senior in the quality of his work, and even outdistanced him in one respect, in the treatment of diffused light. With an extended range of color, almost anything in landscape art might have been possible in his experience. His development in this domain was at the outset rather slow. The first exhibition that he made of impressionistic studies from nature was not precisely impressive, and it took time for him to

emerge from a tentative stage. He felt his way instead of launching himself masterfully upon it. He wanted to get away from the close analysis of forms which had contented him in the eighties, and the transition was difficult. He had, at any rate, to start with, that "honesty, truth, and sincerity" which he so commended in Bastien-Lepage, and for a certain fidelity to nature his earlier landscapes and his latest are "all of a piece." I have alluded to the subjective strain in some of them. It is obvious in a landscape like "The Return of the Fishing Party," in which there is a fairly romantic beauty saturating the sylvan tangle beneath which the figures are assembled. But Weir's status in this region of painting is, above all, that of a veracious observer — doubled with the lover of beauty.

Inness himself never interpreted more convincingly the charm of the American countryside. Though Weir was born at West Point, he settled down in Connecticut early in his career, and, whether from that fact or from the mysterious sources which feed an artist's temperament, he became a clairvoyant New Englander in the delineation of New England scenes. Mr. William A. Coffin has related what happened years ago at the Society of American Artists when "The Factory Village" was placed on the easel. "The jury acclaimed it with shouts of delight and much hand-clapping." One can understand that enthusiasm. I have never seen that picture without a thrill of

pleasure. In lesser hands the motive might easily have fallen upon disaster, the tall chimney on the left lifting a challenge of ugliness against the majesty of the great oak in the foreground. Weir brought the two things into perfect harmony and expressed the indubitable unity of the scene. He expressed, too, its indescribable Americanism, the homely charm which belongs to our own land.

There wasn't a trace of mere rhetoric in him, yet he could be positively eloquent in his depiction of a stony pasture, a meadow bounded by straggling fences, a barn yard, an orchard, any of the places that have for the native an unforgettable and endearing raciness. Weir registered these truths because he profoundly respected their character as such and because he was an honest workman. He placed them in enduring form upon his canvas also because he felt the beauty in them and painted with a kind of imaginative, poetic ardor. I end as I began, reflecting on the powerful personality in him, the original creative force.

XXIX

Robert Blum

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ROBERT BLUM

The art of Robert Blum offers some amusingly disconcerting food for thought to those who make much of the influence of heredity. Both his parents came from Germany. He was born in Cincinnati when that city was peculiarly a centre of Germanism. When he first came in contact with the migratory impulse of American art, on visiting the Philadelphia exposition of 1876, the stimulus to travel in search of a new standard which was stirring many of his young countrymen should have led him straight to Munich. Yet in the midst of the influences making for Teutonic ideals, with Teutonic blood in his veins, he gravitated irresistibly toward a Latin point of view. He had seen in his youth photographs from Fortuny and his followers, and at the Centennial he beheld original works by the Spaniard which profoundly touched him. He never lost traces of the inspiration then received.

He received elementary instruction in Philadelphia for a short time in the seventies, but no other city appears to have offered him any schooling of an artistic sort. He went to school in Europe instead, painting in Venice, in Holland, in Spain, but most of all in Venice. Blum was an ardent traveller. In his earlier years he did much work as an illustrator. For

Scribner's Magazine, he made a memorable series of drawings in Japan. From *The Century* I recall some consummate pen drawings of his, a portrait of Irving as Vanderdecken and one of Joe Jefferson as Bob Acres. What a draftsman he was! But he could handle any medium — oils, water-color, pastel. Also he etched some superb plates. In short, Blum had a *flair* for pure craftsmanship. We have never had any artist more imbued than he was with enthusiasm for technic, technic animated by a blithe and fascinating vivacity.

The vivacity of Blum is what fixes him firmly in American art. It would not make him distinguished were it not tempered by feeling. He was dazzled by the witchery of Fortuny's school, and he paralleled it, importing into his work a certain dainty movement, a certain glitter, half of surface and half of alert, delicate movement, which makes him always elegant, always entertaining, always an ideal of grace and refined piquancy. But you have to add emotion to this enchantment and subtract the last hint of artificiality before you have quite apprehended the secret of Blum's art. He began with some reliance upon *chic*, a quality toward which it is almost inevitable for a beginner to drift when he has had his fancy excited by the audacious *brio* of the modern Spaniards. But with Blum the reaction was swift, and his work shows none of the signs of mere surface cleverness. This was due to his penetrating appreciation of Fortuny. He saw

that the Spaniard was a type of veracity, as well as of brilliancy, and he carried on his own work in a similarly serious vein. He was always serious. That is why I attach a serious value to his vivacity. It is not shallow vivacity of manner, of color. It is vivacity of spirit, of feeling, a very different matter, and a very precious thing in modern art. To see nature in a sunny, wholesome light, to interpret her with gladness and natural ease, to leave an impression that the world is full of loveliness and flowers, pleasant to live in and even pleasanter to see, this is a scheme of artistic development for which we can never be too strenuously grateful, and it is the scheme to which Blum unfailingly adhered. It made him a charming painter. It made him also something of a poet. Certainly, the first pictures of Venice and Spain which he produced had much more in them than the sparkle due to contact with the Roman school of painters; they were generally exquisite, and he progressed higher and higher in the difficult art of making nature light and dainty without sacrificing an iota of her dignity and freshness. No painter of Venice has surpassed Blum in the fragility of his impressions, in their delicacy of fibre, in their ravishing precision, but no painter either has employed so decorative a style with such complete absence of sophistication. I say decorative, because Blum had many of the qualities which are expressed in that epithet. He had picturesqueness of design, brilliancy of light and shade; he had, above all, the

vivid color and the executive fluency which often make an easel picture a decorative unit. But no love of a brilliantly sensuous effect, no predilection for a note of color, of merely picturesque beauty ever won Blum from his veracity; he was never more realistic than when he was lavishing upon a composition all the attributes of color and pure pictorial design which assured him a decorative climax. It is on that merit, on the solidity which goes with his most flashing and debonair studies that it is perhaps most significant to dwell.

Blum can be praised, and praised lavishly, for the sunshine which belongs to his art, for his blue skies and the vividness they bring into his canvases. His picturesqueness is in itself bewitching. The turn of an arm, the fling of a drapery, the poise of a head, nay, the accent of a shadow, these things have been handled in numberless instances by him with the rapid sureness of touch, the deftness, the animation, of an extraordinary brush man, and his work is full of passages over which it is tempting to pause, with no thought of anything but their charm as matters of form, of color. Side by side with his facility and accomplishment, however, there goes, as I have indicated in more than one relation, the substantial motive, the sincere aim by virtue of which he is lifted up to the first rank. His Venice is a dreamy pageant, a place of such scenes as only an observer of imagination as well as of skill could have arrested upon the canvas.

To his Holland he gave a reality which is none the less real because it is streaked with vague suggestions of a colorist's enthusiasm, a draftsman's passion for what is quaint and effective in a strictly pictorial sense. Lastly, and most important of all in some respects, his Japan brings to the eyes of the West one of the most convincing and beautiful interpretations of the East which American art can show, and it is to America, to La Farge, for example, that we are indebted for the most remarkable of artistic impressions of the Orient. Blum's impression is intensely artistic and intensely real. It is true, and it is beautiful. It is full of color, full of movement, full of Japanese feeling, always picturesque and yet never so in any bald melodramatic sense. He seems to have resolved that he would get all the color possible out of his strangely lovely models, that he would make Japanese landscape yield him the most original of tones, yet he never departed from the facts before him; he captured the visage of Japanese life while he added the uncapturable essences which an imagination takes to Japan.

When Blum died, in 1903, his sister, Mrs. Haller, generously decided that the works left in his studio should be given to various public institutions. "The Vintage Festival," a panel ten feet long, went to Cooper Institute, with nearly a hundred figure and drapery studies. The Academy of Design received about four-score studies made for the "Moods of

Music," one of the mural decorations to which I will presently return. There were other gifts to museums in New York and Cincinnati. All of Blum's etched plates and his bust, modelled by Niehaus, went to the city of his birth. He is thus well represented in divers public galleries. Through force of circumstance, however, his most important paintings have for some time been witheld from view. These are the designs which he painted for the concert hall of the Mendelssohn Glee Club, a building demolished since he adorned it in the nineties.

I used to watch him at work upon this frieze when he was painting it in his Grove Street studio under heartbreaking difficulties. The room was only the merest tithe of the size of that hall in which the decorations were to be placed. His fifty foot canvas was stretched on rollers and only a third of it could be exposed to view at one time. But I never saw a happier man. Think of what it meant to an artist who at one time had been confined to the dimensions of a magazine page to be painting for a great wall! Blum was overjoyed and he went at it with all that ardor for technical virtuosity which I have indicated as part of his artistic make-up. He produced an enchanting piece of work.

The first panel is dedicated to the elusive side of music, a company of advancing swaying figures, while falling into something like the rhythm of a dance, nevertheless typifying quite as much musical elements

meditative, poetic, and even metaphysical. The eyes are ravished by the sensuous charm of the color, the mind grasps the strength and artistic beauty of the composition, the first impulse of one's brain is to recognize the joyous maidens for dancers pure and simple, but almost instantly the subtle inspiration which animates the whole takes a firm hold of the imagination and launches one upon the broad tide of musical delight which is too broad and too complex to be crystallized in a single emotion. In painting his second panel the artist sought to substitute the tangible for the evanescent, to be more plastic and explicit. It might be said of the first panel that it is imbued with the spirit of a Mozart andante. The second I would be disposed to liken to a piece of Wagnerian programme music — if the note were not a little more delicate, a little purer, a little more classic, than the characteristic note of Wagner. Perhaps the contrast may be more effectively elucidated by noting that the earlier decoration has a background of trees, while the later one contains an abundance of architectural details. Against these details, against massive marble pillars, which rise white and gleaming into an Italian sky, a procession of priests and bacchic revellers marches across the mosaic pavement toward what we may assume to be the entrance to a temple. An altar is in the centre of the composition, and the instruments of sacrifice are observed near the end of the colonnade, but the moment is without any sanguinary signif-

icance. Mere delight in life seems to animate the entire body of laughing worshippers. Some of the women are dancing to the sound of their own timbrels. A youth clad in a leopard's skin leaps from the ground in sheer exuberance of feeling, and the people who watch the pageant from either side reveal subtly the tension of excitement which holds the whole scene in its grip. Here are the sights upon which one might look in the midst of operatic music and never feel the slightest jar between the two. It stands for the passion and glow and sensual worldly pomp of music, while its companion celebrates the tenderness and mystery of the divinest of all the arts. Surely the principle of growth was in the painter who could rise to these heights from the level of picturesque illustration on which he began his career.

XXX

"291"

XXX

"291"

THERE was an exhibition in New York not long ago which was amusing for more than one reason. It was fathered by Mr. Alfred Stieglitz, who "presented" as the work of seven Americans "159 paintings, photographs and things." It was one of those affairs which involve a certain amount of explanation, and no fewer than four signatures were attached to as many prefatory flourishes in the catalogue. But the most significant words appeared at the back of that pamphlet, words proclaiming that the show marked the twentieth anniversary of the opening of "291," the little gallery in Fifth Avenue where Mr. Stieglitz made his beautiful photographs and found an outlet for his generous enthusiasm by organizing displays of things ignored elsewhere. I do not recall ever having missed one of those exhibitions, beginning with the collection of Rodin's drawings that was put on the walls in 1908. There I saw similarly pioneering exhibitions of Matisse, John Marin, Marius de Zayas, Max Weber, Picabia, Brancusi, Picasso, Gino Severini, and so on. Looking at the exhibition inviting these remarks I found myself thinking of it partly for its own sake and partly for its commemorative meaning.

And I fell to meditating on the principle, as it were, of "291."

It was, in the first place, the admirable principle of open-mindedness. Alfred Stieglitz, who clings to his own ideas with the stanchest tenacity, has never pretended to impose them upon anybody else. All he has desired to do has been to make known the ideas in which he believes and, for the rest, to watch their fortunes. The atmosphere of "291" was thus always one of the right kind of liberalism. The place was a laboratory for the exposition of this or that experiment in contemporary art. It was valuable because it was the only source of information on subjects it was necessary to know. I have always maintained that it was wrong merely to scorn modernism, deserving though it be of scorn. The indispensable thing is to look it in the face, analyze it, grasp it for what it is. It waxes fat on ignorance. Condemnation of its vagaries must be based on the most patient of studies. For this Stieglitz supplied precious documents and thereby performed a memorable service to art. The only pang involved in frequentation of his museum, if I may so describe it, was that of disagreeing with so high-minded and devoted an advocate. But disagree with him I generally did, and, looking over the long list of exhibitions appended to his latest catalogue, I was in no wise moved to alter old impressions.

That some of the names enumerated are to-day held in greater honor — in some quarters — than they

were when Stieglitz first made them known here, has no great evidential weight. Twenty years make a very short period. It remains to be seen how these names will be wearing when still another twenty years have passed, and in the meantime I doubt if the tendency is in the direction given by the men represented in the list. In fact, the movement is rather the other way, rather toward a return to conservative modes. I cannot dogmatize from the list. It is too heterogeneous. But there is one thought emerging from revery on its variegated types on which I venture to pause. Is not Stieglitz himself, as photographer, the one figure of them all inspiring a certain confidence? And why? Because he has known absolutely what he was about. He has known the camera with the thoroughness of a master, has exercised his instrument with complete understanding and authority. In a word, he has been a sound workman. Is it not one of the secrets, on the other hand, of good art?

Revisiting "291" in memory with this catalogue before me and realizing that so many of its ghosts have been indeed ghosts, frail, insubstantial apparitions blown by the wind, I surmise that the explanation of their futility has resided in their refusal to make good workmen of themselves, their failure to play the game. Yes, I know all about their "purpose." It has been to express themselves. But they have babbled in strange, outlandish idioms, missing the language of art. That language is, among other things, a language

of craftsmanship. Painting is a craft, like any other. Flout it and you land in uncouth obscurity.

Stieglitz is a courageous, resourceful man. I wish he would undertake the organization of an exhibition such as has never been held by any modernist. Let him supply each one of his friends with canvases divided in the middle by a straight line. Let them paint to the left of the line pictures after their own hearts, expressing themselves in their own way. And to the right let them paint the same subjects according to Hoyle, which is to say, with all the elements of perspective, texture, light and shade, line, form, color, handled with competence. This might show whether the modernist really knows how to paint or if the fearful and wonderful expedients he adopts make the refuge of inadequacy. If he needed inspiration he could easily get it from Stieglitz. Look at the latter's photographs of cloud forms and trees. How beautiful they are! Because, for one thing, they are well done.

XXXI

Fortuny

XXXI

FORTUNY

On the death of Senator W. A. Clark, it developed that he had bequeathed his collections to the Metropolitan Museum, subject to the condition that they be preserved by themselves somewhere within the vast building in Central Park. The condition was in conflict with the policy of the museum, and the gift was declined, wisely, I think, both in view of the policy aforesaid and because the collections, while containing many treasures, do not form precisely a unit. It was natural while the subject was in the air to think over the collections and to find this or that reason for forming one's own opinion as to their disposition. As I went over them in memory I could see how certain pieces would practically duplicate others in the Metropolitan; how one old picture or another modern one might really enrich the museum or leave it not appreciably strengthened. The reader may be a little puzzled by my own choice of the one picture which I hated to have the Metropolitan miss. It was Fortuny's "Choice of the Model." I could perfectly understand anybody's being surprised by this selection, for if there is one tradition in painting that is nominally played out it is the tradition of Fortuny. Our modern ideas date peculiarly from the rediscovery of Velasquez

and Hals, and the demigods of our own time have been such followers of theirs as Manet and Sargent. But latter-day enthusiasm for technic has, if I may so express it, the defect of its quality; it is a little narrow, though it is all for breadth and the world well lost. When Kipling wrote his ballad, "In the Neolithic Age," he inserted in it two oft-quoted lines whose axiomatic wisdom may well commend itself to the student of painting:

> There are nine and sixty ways of constructing tribal lays,
> And—every—single—one—of—them—is—right.

One of the "right" ways of painting is the way of Mariano José-Maria Bernardo Fortuny. I like to give him his full Spanish style, if only for old sake's sake, in memory of the day long ago when I was all set to write his biography. In Paris I fell in with Philip Gilbert Hamerton, and he asked me to write one of those "Portfolio Monographs" which he was editing in place of the old miscellaneous "Portfolio." We discussed subjects and had about decided on Canaletto when I said: "Why not do a modern man who has not been done in English? Why not do Fortuny?" Hamerton was delighted with the idea, and when, soon after, I went to Venice, I found that it met with the cordialest approval of the artist's widow. Neither of the publications by Yriarte and the Baron Davillier had exhaustively covered the ground, and repeatedly among her innumerable sketches, studies, and other

souvenirs, Madame Fortuny and I talked over the book which was to be the final record of a brilliant life. We were to go over the letters together. Marianito, the painter's son, was himself practising a very different sort of art; he had studied at Munich, and rumor had it that he was painting huge Wagnerian compositions. But he, too, was in the liveliest sympathy with my plan and would himself gladly photograph a lot of the unpublished paintings that adorned the beautiful old palazzo on the Grand Canal. As can be imagined, I was well content. At Rome, I hunted up Fortuny's only pupil, Simonetti, and learned that he also had a sheaf of letters. In private collections in Spain I looked at Fortunys that had never before been reproduced, and in Paris the late William H. Stewart readily gave me access to that incomparable collection of Fortuny's works which was afterward dispersed at auction in New York. When I talked it all over with Hamerton again we were both more than pleased with the outlook; but when, in the following summer, I had renewed my explorations and we returned to the project, we were suddenly aware of another color in our dream. It was a stern, practical issue that put it there. It used to amuse me to count up, as I went along, the sums required for the purchase of documents, copyright fees, and the manufacture of copperplates. By the time I had gone over the balance sheet with Hamerton and with the publisher in London, we calculated that it would cost a good

deal more to produce the book than would be returned by the complete sale of a generous edition. Wherefore the classical biography of Fortuny, as I had fondly imagined it would be, incontinently went aglimmering. But, as the reader may surmise, the episode left me with a certain weakness for Fortuny.

It isn't a matter of sentiment alone, either. I wouldn't have launched upon that task if I hadn't had a deep feeling for Fortuny as a painter, nor would I revert to his art now if I did not still preserve a vivid sense of his extraordinary ability. He was one of those painters who are born, not made, even though it must be admitted that as a lad he did not show the precocity usual in a master. He was born at Reus, in the northeastern part of Spain, the child of obscure parents, who died when he was still very young. The grandfather who brought him up used to travel about as the owner of a little puppet show. He would take Fortuny with him when he gave a performance in the market-place at Tarragona, and at home they used to work together over the wax figures employed in the tiny theatre. They made votive figurines for the churches, too, and Fortuny must have shown some talent in them, for presently the grandfather sent him to the academy presided over by Domingo Soberano, and there he made such progress that while still in his teens he was fitted for the much more pretentious academy at Barcelona. At twenty he won the Grand Prix, which sent him to Rome for

two years, with an allowance of about five hundred dollars a year. It was not very much, yet it must be said that Barcelona was, on the whole, kind to him. The municipal authorities recalled him from Rome for the highly honorable purpose of sending him to make a big military picture in Morocco, where the Spaniards were at war. He saw the decisive battle of Tetouan, or Wad-Ras, and made from it ultimately a remarkable canvas. Incidentally, his contact with the Moorish scene brought his art to a swift efflorescence. I shall not wickedly resume, in this place, the details accumulating in the course of those researches to which I have referred. It is enough to state that thenceforth Fortuny's prosperity advanced with phenomenal rapidity. He worked variously in Morocco and at Rome, in Madrid, Grenada, and Paris. I say "worked" advisedly, for he did very little else. Possessed of a delightful personality, he had the world at his feet, especially when he married the daughter of Federigo Madrazo, when the Goupils took him up, and Mr. Stewart became not only his patron but his friend. He was intimate with some of the leading French artists of his time. Gérôme, upon one occasion, lent him his studio. But he had few social tastes, finding his chief relaxation in the collecting of beautiful objects of art and craftsmanship, and his life was one long labor until he died of Roman fever in 1874.

What is the story of his labor, what were its origins,

and what are the special characteristics of its fruits? I once went all the way to Barcelona to see what his early work was like, and found that it was nothing if not academic. The bacchantes which figure in the rather conventional designs of his pupilage might have been drawn by any of the carefully trained young types of the Paris Salon. Form, as he depicts it, is form as it is understood in disciplinary studios. But the Moroccan experience, as I have indicated, changed all that. It confirmed in him an instinct for going straight to nature for the truth, and in Morocco, too, the effects of dazzling sunlight brought a vivifying element into his work. What I feel was the specially invigorating and illuminating force in Fortuny's art was what I can only describe as the genius of sheer painting, the innate disposition of a man to express himself through consummate draftsmanship and a fairly magical manipulation of pigment. Both in oils and in water-colors, once he had got into his stride, he became like a conjurer taking a rabbit out of a hat. Connoisseurship to-day is a little impatient of such triumphs as his, counting rabbits as but small game, and I haven't the least intention of placing this artist in a false perspective for purposes of eulogy. On the other hand, I think that those who would disparage Fortuny on account of his glitter overlook the firm foundation on which the glitter rests. They confuse spiritual with technical values. He himself had misgivings as to the precise depth of his art. In a

letter to Davillier, written at the zenith of his career, he says: "I continue to work, but truly I begin to tire (morally) of the kind of art and of the pictures which success has imposed upon me, and which (between ourselves) are not the true expression of my taste." Very well, let us agree as regards the matter of taste. I am not at all sure that I could live happily sitting opposite "The Choice of the Model," day after day, and year after year. But if it were hanging in the Metropolitan Museum I know that I would pause before it just once in so often, not only with admiration and respect, but with a particular zest for the kind of technical virtuosity that Fortuny exhibits in the picture.

And the kind of virtuosity that is there is, I repeat, the kind that has its roots deep in true painter's painting. He was no mere meretricious juggler with the brush, but a serious technician, who looked to the graver side of his art. There is nothing about him more significant than a certain passage in one of his early letters, written when as a student of twenty he was settled in Rome. From this it appears that Raphael's decorations in the Vatican bowled him over, and when it came to the *tableau bien peint*, he preferred above all others the great portrait of Innocent X, by Velasquez. He had always a passion for the old masters. At the Prado, in Madrid, he made copies of Titian, Tintoretto, El Greco, Velasquez, and Goya. What Velasquez meant to him you may see from the

"Spanish Lady," in the Metropolitan Museum, which he painted at Rome in 1865. There is no glitter in that. On the contrary, it is a broadly painted, really noble thing, an altogether worthy pendant to the tradition of Velasquez, of Goya. However, do not let us strain the point. It was not by work of this sort that Fortuny lived. His *métier* was for a lighter, more sparkling type of painting. What it is important to remember is that the knowledge and authority affirmed in the "Spanish Lady" are carried over into the field in which it was his destiny to shine. They tell there primarily in his strong, swift, flashing draftsmanship, and then in his diabolically sure handling of pigment. There is no one like him for a kind of blazing fluency, for the plastic evocation of a figure or a bit of still-life, for the perfect denotement of a lacy or shimmering stuff. And over all his material, whether he be dealing with the sunlit picturesqueness of Morocco or Spain, or with romantic costumes in a stylized French interior, he causes the light to play in a staccato manner that is merely ravishing. The commentator who cannot get away from Manet, says "Bric-à-brac!" For my part, when I am confronted by Fortuny I can momentarily forget my Manet and my Velasquez and my Rembrandt, and say simply "What painting!"

When they tell me it has lost its hold upon connoisseurship I permit myself a chuckle. As a matter of fact, I do not believe the world will ever willingly let

THE MOORISH KNIFE GRINDER

FROM THE PAINTING BY FORTUNY

the work of Fortuny die. Its intrinsic brilliance is too much for that. It is too superbly eloquent of a man who exhaustively knew his craft. It has too much *verve;* it is too finished and *gaillard* in style. There is a measure of confirmation for its validity, too, in the circumstance that it left a deep mark upon its time. Fortuny founded something like a school, though I can remember little recognition of this among his followers. I have foregathered with flocks of them, and it always made me laugh a little inwardly to see how indisposed they were to admit any debt at all to the dead master. It was one thing to join in praise of his qualities; it was another to grant that without their influence the speakers would have taken a different line. I could understand the attitude of those Spaniards and Italians; they hadn't studied under Fortuny, but under other men, and doubtless they had gone their own gaits. Nevertheless he had put something in the air which they had not been able to resist. It was the glamour of romantic picturesqueness and with it the lure of sleight-of-hand, of miraculous dexterity. Villegas was one of the pillars of the school. He travelled far enough from Fortuny when he painted the more celebrated canvases of his maturity, "The Death of the Bull-Fighter" and "The Marriage of the Dogaressa." But if you want to get the pure flavor of Villegas you will get it in some such bits of piquant *genre* as he painted when he, in his turn, sojourned in Morocco. It was so

again with Pradilla. He made his fame through big compositions like "The Surrender of Boabdil at Grenada," which were far more elaborate than anything in Fortuny's *monde*, but there are many smaller things of his in which you come obviously upon the trail of Fortuny. There have been any number of them, Gallegos, Viniegra, Domingo, Barbudo, Casanova, Garcia y Ramos, Pelayo, and more others than it is perhaps worth citing, for if some of them are good, some of them are very brittle and bad.

The man who more than all the rest rivalled Fortuny on his own ground was the Italian Boldini in his earlier period. He also had an incredible facility, incredible sleight-of-hand. I can see him painting my own portrait in two or three sittings. He did it like a man dashing off a note. But Boldini, like Fortuny, is both draftsman and brushman, an authentic master of paint, and in older days, before he had got committed to the portraiture that we know, he was wont to tackle the same sort of theme that had attracted his Spanish contemporary. He would paint the women at a Moorish bath, or the buildings around the Place Clichy, or a long road gleaming beneath a hard blue sky, or a coquette lying on a sofa in the studio, all grace and *frou-frou*. They date from the seventies, these dazzling *tours-de-force*, a long time ago, and Boldini, I have gathered, has no great opinion of them himself. Just the same, they are among the very best things he has ever done. Though they date from

the seventies, they are still, praise be, very much alive. The whole Fortuny tradition, I maintain, still possesses this unmistakable vitality. Every now and then I find that I have to break a lance for it. I can recall one that I bore in the fray, against Elihu Vedder. At a dinner-table in Rome he nearly suffocated at the idea of my asserting that Fortuny knew how to paint. It was all a trick, he said. There was no glamour about Fortuny, for him, though he had known the artist in the days of his triumph. But the glamour is there for me, and precisely for the reason that, in spite of Vedder, he knew ineffably how to paint. That is why I remain incorrigible and wish that, by hook or by crook, the Metropolitan had been able to salvage "The Choice of the Model."

XXXII

Zorn

XXXII

ZORN

Zorn's etchings are far more familiar in the United States than works of his done with the brush. They have been enormously popular, too, but this without really establishing him as a permanent figure. The vogue of the prints, indeed, has always seemed to me to illustrate nothing more nor less than a curious aberration of taste. He knew nothing about the genius of etching. His line is that of a pen draftsman, clever, no doubt, but in no wise qualified to rank with the line of the masters of the needle. Is he, on the other hand, a master of painting? The answer is of a mixed nature.

Scandinavia has never produced a major school of art in the strict European sense of the term. It has had its successful figures, of course. Denmark has had what we may call an international representative in Kroyer. Norway has given good painters to the world in Thaulow and Edelfelt. From Sweden have come Zorn, Carl Larsson, and Bruno Liljefors. But I well remember how at the Chicago fair in 1893 the efforts of these men, and of a few others, failed to lift their countries to a plane of strong racial affirmation, and in 1900, at Paris, the three groups made no better effect. In fact, I found then that the three had

settled down to the level of one and that the whole company had forthwith stood still. Nothing was changed, in essentials, when the American-Scandinavian Society brought over about one hundred and fifty paintings a few years ago and showed them in New York. The feeling persisted that no truly national force had developed in Danish, Norwegian or Swedish art, that each country continued to depend for its æsthetic distinction upon some lucky individual. And the odd thing is that the individual would not turn out to be a precisely great artist. He would have talent rather than genius. That is the case as regards Zorn.

Born at Mora in 1860, the son of a Bavarian brewer, he gave every evidence of artistic precocity. He began as a boy to carve wooden figures, coloring them with the juice of berries. It was as a sculptor that he made his first studies in the Academy at Stockholm, to which he was admitted while still in his teens, but he soon turned to the brush and is said to have attracted considerable attention by his deftness as a water-colorist. He was a young man when he set out upon his travels, painting in Spain and Italy, in Constantinople and Morocco. He settled for a time in London and was much in Paris. At the time of our exposition in Chicago he visited the United States, where he painted a number of good portraits, including those of Grover Cleveland and Andrew Carnegie. He died in 1920 after a life of triumph.

Fortune had smiled upon him almost from the beginning, and it never left him. Of all the Scandinavian artists he had the widest European fame. His portrait painted by himself is that of a powerful, squarely built man, resolute, aggressive. He wears clothes of brick red, and the audacity seems characteristic of him. He was a type to carry off a flourish of that kind. Yet — and this is the crucial point — as you look about among his paintings you do not find quite the personality you expect after that stalwart figure and those romantic garments.

The Scandinavians are, as artists, a race of simple, straightforward, and even commonplace observers. They are not men of dreams, or, in the main, men of theories, academic or of any other sort. The material of Scandinavian art is found in the every-day walks of Scandinavian life, and it is handled with a sincere effort for a truthful expression of every-day appearances. Zorn represents this art in its most normal aspect. He paints what he can see and touch and handle. He illustrates Swedish life and its types, the process of breadmaking as it is made picturesque by environment and costume, the traits of an old clockmaker in his portrait of "Djos Mats," the peasants in their distinctive dress. His "Rowing to Church" is like a page from the familiar movement of things Swedish; as a characterization, in color and in atmosphere, it carries absolute conviction. Very rarely does he seem merely photographic, either, as he does in

his banal "Butcher Shop." The veracity of the painting has always its artistic accent, its hint of the craftsman who has his own way of expressing himself. It is a prodigiously swift, sure, and vivacious way. That is what has given Zorn his high status.

He was, a long way behind Sargent, the kind of virtuoso that Sargent was, the man of exact vision and an accomplished, even brilliant, hand. He had the technic of an adroit Salonnier, raised to a higher power. There is a French precision about his workmanship, enriched by a greater flexibility, a lighter touch, than is always characteristic of the Parisian school with which he is somehow affiliated. But he remains the Salonnier, the clever, inordinately clever, type, rather than the master of a style. That is where you recognize the superiority of Sargent. The technic of the American has in it an extraordinary originality and elevation; it has the stamp of genius upon it. Zorn's impresses you without any enchantment; it is effective enough to be called brilliant, but it is not fine enough to be called distinguished. All the time you are aware of certain limitations that clog his footsteps and keep him upon a very mundane level.

They were limitations of taste. We do not look in him for the beauty that implies imagination. With the latter quality he simply had nothing whatever to do, and to regret its absence would be beside the point, to ask Zorn to be somebody else. But it is fairly

puzzling to see an artist with such a passion for the joy in life as he had remaining insensitive to the grace, the subtle charm, that go with it. His color, on which some commentators grow oddly fervid, seems to me to be singularly wanting in quality. It is vivid and it is pure, but it has no original grain or glow, and it is totally devoid of those transparencies and those exquisite nuances of tone which proclaim the authentic colorist. In water-color he sometimes draws nearer to the delicacy which I have in mind, but even in that medium his really beguiling passages are only episodical, and in oils the most that can be said is that he is not, like so many Scandinavians, merely crude. A defect of taste stood between him and sheer loveliness of color, just as it dogged his labors in the matter of pure painted surface. He had technical force and authority, he had positive exhilaration in attack. He did not know how to caress a canvas, to give it sensuous beauty, a rare patina.

If such taste as he possessed is anywhere disconcerting it is in his treatment of the nude. I have occasionally observed in him a happy fusion of the picture-making faculty with a response to the supple grace of form. I recall in his "Summer Evening" a composition in which an unwonted elegance presided over the painter's customary realism. But in most of his nudes you get the full measure of his inherent coarseness. The advocate of truth at any price may retort that the coarseness does not matter, that what

actually counts is Zorn's superbly accurate, full-bodied recording of the visible fact. I am quite conscious of its value. But I cannot ignore the gross materialism in work of this kind or its broad significance. It points, after all, to the central character of the artist, which is what we are bound to pursue; it points to the essential Zorn. He belongs to that band of artists who conquer by virtue of the eye and the hand alone, who are technicians and nothing more. Look at his portraits. The tangible, obviously perceptible facts are unmistakably there, but nothing is added to them, no suggestion of special insight, no stylistic glamour, no distinction. Taking Zorn's art in its length and breadth we are interested but not deeply impressed. It has enormous vitality, yet, by some strange paradox, there seems nothing creative about it, nothing inspiring. Where great art seems to transcend the idiom of the country in which it was produced, this art remains, for all its workmanlike merits, rather narrowly Scandinavian.

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